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ABSTRACT

The 12 articles in this journal issue focus on writing as an expression of language. Specific topics discussed in the articles are: (1) What can be learned from writing research, (2) young children and writing (3) translating meaning from spoken to written language, (4) assumptions about writing instruction, (5) first grade writers, (6) learning to spell by spelling, (7) beginning writers' pencils and paper, (8) writing development patterns, (9) environmental influences on children's views of writing, (10) dynamic and static composition models, (11) peer editing, and (12) business writing and composition instruction. (HTH)

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TIP
Theory into Practice

Summer 1980

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An Expression of Language

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This Issue

The expanding field of writing research is providing educators with valuable new insights into the way writing is learned and how it might best be taught. As the articles in this issue indicate, new knowledge is being created about the writing process, writing development and the varying functions of writing. Within these articles, several underlying ideas are shared:

1. Order is created internally, and therefore may not be imposed upon the learner. It must be constructed by the learner through complex social interactions.
2. There is a close relationship between cognition and communication. Language "in use" is the link, and must be the focus of productive inquiry into the process.
3. Writers learn from the language they construct.
4. Language functions in situational contexts which dictate the form of writing and impose certain constraints on the writer.
5. We often underestimate learners' knowledge and ability to use language.

Many of these same points were made by writing researchers at the recent International Reading Association conference, and most specifically by Dorothy Watson in her role as a symposium discussant.

In addition to these points, a subtler theme which suffuses the articles in this journal is that of the interrelatedness of all the manifestations of language (reading, writing, speaking, listening). The mutual supportiveness of all these processes in the language development of learners is most explicitly addressed by Glenda Bissex:

"The GNYS (genius) at work is our human capacity for language. DO NAT DSTRB is a caution to observe how it works, for the logic by which we teach is not always the logic by which children learn." It is the sincere hope that this message will result in a clarification of the nature and breadth of literacy and its development. It is through this understanding that instructional programs will be produced of increasing benefit to children.

Diane E. DeFord
Guest Editor

What We Can Learn From Writing Research

Marcia Farr Whiteman
The National Institute of Education

In his report to the Ford Foundation Donald Graves (1978) noted that writing is seldom practiced in our schools. According to the surveys and reviews conducted for the report, classroom time, public investment in education, educational research, language arts textbooks, teacher certification requirements, and teacher education courses all favor reading over writing by a large ratio. Furthermore, what writing instruction there is generally consists of workbook exercises and drills in what are thought to be "before writing skills," i.e., penmanship, vocabulary, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and standard English usage.

Such exercises and drills may help students gain control over the mechanics of writing. Studies such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 1975) have reported that students in the United States do not have primary difficulty with mechanics in their writing — the essays collected for these studies show fairly correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and standard English grammar. They also show, however, that students experience other writing difficulties, often creating "awkward" sentences and "incoherent" paragraphs. In addition to evidence from NAEP, there is abundant anecdotal evidence of a national concern about the quality of writing in this country. Education journals and the mass media are full of complaints about illiteracy in general and "the writing problem" in particular.

Graves has suggested that the quality of student writing is problematic partly because students are being taught primarily to read rather than to write. Even when they are taught "writing," it is primarily the transmission of knowledge *about* writing from teachers to students, rather than guided practice in actual writing. Why is this the case? It may be partly because of the current emphasis on testing and documenting student progress. Because writing is not easily evaluated quantitatively, students are tested in reading, math, and perhaps in standard English usage and writing mechanics — and then teaching follows the tests.

In addition to the current emphasis on testing, two other reasons can be given for the lack of attention to writing in our schools: textbooks don't emphasize writing (and they govern much of classroom time), and teachers are not being prepared to teach writing (few have had courses in the teaching of writing, although most elementary teachers at least have had up to three courses in the teaching of reading). The problem in both of these cases is in large part due to the almost total lack of knowledge with which to build teacher education courses and curricula.

Fortunately, this knowledge is now being created. Researchers from many disciplines are beginning to explore the nature of composing processes, how people learn to write, the actual uses of writing in business and industry, the effect of language variation on learning to write, the differences between speech and writing, and many similar questions. In order to promote such inquiry, the National Institute of Education began a writing research program in 1978. The discussion which follows is a report and update on the major research themes that have received support from the Institute. (Most, although not all, of the current studies discussed below are NIE-supported). First, I will discuss the recent history of writing research, then I will discuss current work under four major themes: composing processes, the development of writing abilities, functions of writing, and language variation and writing.

Recent History

Writing research as an interdisciplinary field of inquiry is a quite recent development in educational and social science research. Reading research, in contrast, is at least 50 to 100 years ahead of writing research. The best of this new research combines the intuitive knowledge gained from the study of literature with the social science knowledge about language from branches of linguistics (especially sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics), anthropology, psychology, and education. Many humanities scholars would argue that writing research goes back centuries, at least to the time of Aristotle. This is true: scholars have been writing about writing during all those centuries, and have focused on a close, interpretive analysis of text. Rhetoricians have also written extensively about writing, among other things defining modes of discourse (Kinneavy, 1971). However, with all the accumulated intuitive knowledge about writing, we still know hardly anything about *how* people learn to write, what composing processes they use, whether or not there are any natural stages of development, or whether adults differ from children in such learning. Nor do we know how best to facilitate the learning of writing in school.

Only in the last decade or so has writing research begun to address these questions and begun to apply social science research approaches and methodology to the study of writing. Within the last two decades, researchers have begun to study the development of writing in children (Loban, 1963, 1976; O'Donnell, Griffin and Norris, 1967; Hunt, 1965; Britton et al., 1975). However, most of this work (with the exception of Britton's work) focuses on sentences, especially on the syntactic complexity of sentences. Since it is now clear (NAEP, 1975) that most students' difficulties with writing lie beyond the sentence level (e.g., incoherence of paragraphs), this body of data is not very useful in addressing these difficulties. Furthermore, as Bereiter (1979) and others have pointed out, the work on writing development prior to Britton was quantitative rather than qualitative, and resulted in frequency counts of embedded clauses and vocabulary. Whereas these frequency counts did indicate something about writing development (slow incremental development, rather than dramatic stages of development), these conclusions apply only to the development of sentences. They tell us nothing about qualitative changes in writing development, and they tell us nothing about discourse level development (i.e., the development of connected sentences).

Britton et al. (1975) did attempt to identify qualitative changes in writing ability. They based their research in England on a national collection of routine samples of writing from all curriculum areas by students aged 11-18. They saw a development (reflected in age grading) in this corpus from "expressive" (relatively undisciplined) writing to "transactional" and "poetic" writing. This research was groundbreaking in that it looked at *function* in student writing rather than at superficial aspects of *form*. As such, it has influenced the development of much subsequent research on writing development.

Composing Process

Work on developing models of composing processes has only recently begun, and by a relatively limited number of people. Hayes and Flower of Carnegie Mellon University (1979) are using protocol analysis to define problem solving procedures writers use during writing. This methodology (from cognitive psychology) allows the researchers to analyze tape recordings made by writers "thinking aloud" during writing. In addition to defining the processes, they are looking at the sequence and organization of these processes. Preliminary work indicates that the composing process consists of three major subprocesses: planning, translating and editing.

Other work on composing is being done by Nold (in press), Scardamalia (in press), and Perl (1978). Nold's work on revising is attempting to sort out the different levels of processing which go on in revising and possibly in composing as well. Scardamalia's work on the cognitive demands of writing is providing a developmental model which will permit the teacher to identify specific cues about when children

can move from writing sentences which are less cognitively complex or demanding, to those which are increasingly so. Perl developed a methodology for analyzing the composing processes of basic writers (using data from remedial freshman students at CUNY). This methodology can be used by teachers and researchers to understand the difficulties some students experience while composing.

Development of Writing Abilities

This aspect of writing research will be organized according to age levels: preschool, elementary, secondary and postsecondary.

Preschool. Anderson, et al. at the Laboratory for Comparative Human Cognition, University of California at San Diego; Harste, Woodward, and Burke at Indiana University; and Y. Goodman at the University of Arizona, are studying preschoolers' knowledge of and experiences with written language. All three groups of researchers share the assumption that children know more about written language before coming to school than has generally been assumed, and that it is important for schools to *know* what children know in order to begin teaching them successfully.

Anderson, et al., are providing a detailed description of two years in the preschool experiences with literacy of 16 children of a low-income community constituted of black, Spanish-speaking and white families. Daily audiotaped diary entries by primary caretakers and weekly field observations by researchers are recording the children's encounters with written language.

Harste, Woodward and Burke are gathering data about (1) what preschool children already know about written language, (2) what children expect of print in books, letters and other parts of the environment, and (3) what strategies children naturally use in their growing control of written language. The data are being gathered by asking 48 children to perform five simple tasks: (1) read commercial labels common to their environment; (2) dictate and read a story; (3) read or pretend to read a story and a letter; (4) write anything they can write; and (5) write or pretend to write a story and a letter.

Y. Goodman is studying pre-school literacy among Native American and Spanish-speaking children in the southwest. Her data are observational as well as from tasks similar to those used by Harste, Woodward and Burke. The results of all three of these projects will be clearly useful to both preschool and elementary teachers, for they will provide abundant information about what children already know about literacy when they first come to school.

Elementary. Five research projects will be described here which are studying various aspects of writing development in children during elementary schooling. Two of these projects are focusing on the very early learning of writing, during the initial transition from oral to written language use. Graves at the University of New Hampshire is using innovative and eclectic methodology to closely observe actual writing behaviors of 16 children, following eight of them from grade one to two, and eight of them from grade three to four. Focusing more on the writing process than on the written products of these children, Graves and two other full time investigators are spending two years observing the children in the classroom through hand recording and videotaping. They are also gathering data through interviews and through analysis of children's written products. Preliminary results show a relationship between play behavior and writing behavior (also noted in Vygotsky, 1978), and between drawing and writing.

Florio and Clark at Michigan State University are working in a second and a sixth grade classroom to describe how children become writers in school. They are documenting (via observation, videotape and interviews) the thinking and judgment of the teachers about writing instruction. In addition, they are describing all the writing that is accomplished by the teachers and students in these classrooms. In this description they view the classroom as a community for learning which generates many occasions for writing. They are learning that the writing produced on these many occasions serves a variety of social and expressive functions, and that it grows out of the interaction between teacher and students. This research will result in richly detailed case studies of the teaching and learning of writing and will serve as a model of a teacher-researcher cooperative research team.

King and Rentel (1979) at Ohio State University, also are observing closely early writing development in children. They are gathering their data in three modalities of language (interactive speech, dictation, and writing) from 20 first grade children and 30 kindergarten children in an inner city and a suburban school. In analyzing this data, they are studying children's planning strategies (such as categorizing) and their developing use of cohesive structures (e.g., moving from simply conjoining sentences with conjunctions to using more complex story schema and literary structures in their writing).

Two other research projects are also focusing on the developing use of cohesive structures in children's

writing. Tenenbaum at the University of Southern California has gathered data from 50 children of mixed ethnic backgrounds in grades two, four and six. These data consist of written narratives produced in class and videotapes of the children reciting narratives to their classmates. The oral and written stories are being compared for their use of two structures to create cohesion: reference and topicality.

Bartlett, at Rockefeller University, also is studying the developing use of a structure (anaphora) which creates cohesion in narratives. For example, as part of this study children have been asked to write about a four panel cartoon in which three, same age, same sex characters interact, (a context in which one pronoun, e.g., *he* or *she*, could refer to more than one person). Children have also been asked to edit stories by other children in the same age range which contain ambiguous personal pronouns or definite noun phrases. Since these data are being gathered from children in grades 4-8, the researchers are attempting to identify developmental trends in the use of anaphora and how it affects cohesion.

Secondary. Three research projects will be described here which are studying the writing abilities of secondary school students. Flood and Menyuk at Boston University are focusing on the development of the ability to detect ambiguity and to produce paraphrase, since these are two aspects of language processing which are important in the learning of writing. They have gathered data from 64 students in four age groups (9-11, 12-14, 15-17, and college freshman), and they are attempting to extract from this data insights about the gradual acquisition of full linguistic competence in the abilities to disambiguate and paraphrase.

Lloyd-Jones, Klaus and Diehl, at the University of Iowa, are studying syntactic fluency and rhetorical fluency in the writing of 17 year olds. Their data are taken from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (cycle No. 3) and consist of 160 compositions rated by the primary trait method of writing assessment. The value of the study is that it will provide teachers with a scientific, non-intuitive basis for counseling their students on stylistic practices, allowing them to connect specific linguistic features to specific rhetorical tasks.

Applebee at the National Council of Teachers of English is documenting the kinds of writing which students are asked to do in secondary school. He is studying the contexts in which they write, including variations in instruction from teacher to teacher and subject to subject. He started by doing case studies of two high schools which contrast in size, academic emphasis and student population; he is continuing to gather information by exploring a small national sample of teachers in major subject areas. In addition, he is undertaking 1) a detailed analysis of the gathered student writing, 2) an analysis of assumptions about writing and the teaching of writing reflected in textbooks, 3) observational studies of writing processes fostered by particular instructional patterns, and 4) a longitudinal study of the writing experiences and the development of writing abilities in 24 students across the high school years.

Postsecondary. Kroch and Hindle, at the University of Pennsylvania, are characterizing key syntactic differences between speech and writing among mature language users. Their data is drawn from the speech and writing of 60 people at the postsecondary level of education (including those in remedial and regular composition classes, college graduates and composition instructors). This group of people includes blacks and whites, from both working class and middle class backgrounds. They hope by a comparative study to discover what the constraints of speech and writing are and how these constraints affect both syntactic choices and discourse (intersentence) organization. This study should contribute to a more effective writing pedagogy because it will be based on a clearer understanding of the differences between writing and speech. Specifically, their research should make clearer both the nature of the rules or judgments being taught and their relationships to the grammatical competence that the novice writer brings to his or her task from speech.

Functions of Writing

Odell and Goswami, at SUNY Albany and the University of Tennessee respectively, are describing the nature and functions of writing in several non-academic settings in business, labor and government. The first year they worked in a social service agency in upstate New York and a labor union in Tennessee. In contrast to other researchers, they have not assigned writing tasks to participants in their study. Instead, they have collected naturally occurring writing samples (a variety of kinds) from each participant. In addition to analyzing these samples, they have interviewed the writers and are studying the social context within which the writing occurs (e.g., hierarchical structure of the organization, the number and roles of people the writers usually come into contact with, and the job-related decisions each worker has to make). Specifically, the study includes: (1) extensive on-site observation of writers in their occupational settings and (2) analysis of the composing processes these workers use, the features of their written products,

the writers' perceptions of their rhetorical tasks, and audiences' reactions to selected pieces of writing. The study includes thirty-two writer-informants, eight at each of four sites.

Results of this study will be of interest to employers who want to understand the sort of writing their employees do, to researchers who want to conduct ethnographic studies of writing, and to teachers of writing who want to prepare students to write well in occupational settings.

Other work which is significant in this area includes that by Heath (in press) in North and South Carolina. Heath used ethnographic methods to identify needs for writing in the out of school lives of black and white high school boys. She investigated both job (textile mills) and non-job (e.g., community centers) contexts in an effort to identify real uses of and needs for writing which could help inform writing instruction in the local high schools. The investigation of the textile mills where most of the boys would eventually work yielded no useful information since she found no need for writing on the job. The investigation of community contexts, however, did reveal much naturally occurring writing (e.g., notices in community center bulletin boards, and messages to other members of the community), and these uses of writing were applied to the improvement of ongoing writing instruction in the schools. The result was increased writing by the students in school and a higher level of motivation and interest in learning to write effectively. One classroom activity, for example, consisted of the students rewriting government regulations for obtaining public housing. The rewriting process resulted in their examining sentence structure, coherence of the prose (inter-sentence connectedness), and other aspects of written language which before that time had apparently bored them. The obvious value of this kind of research is its clear application to effective instruction by providing valid information about what students already know and can bring to the learning process.

Scribner and Cole (in press) also investigated functions of writing; their work was with the Vai, a traditional society in Liberia. This group of people developed an indigenous script of their oral language about 135 years ago. The Vai script is used primarily for certain functions (e.g., farm record keeping and letter sending), and co-exists with two other scripts (Arabic and English). Arabic is used for religious practice and learning, and English is used officially in national political and economic institutions. Part of this study investigated the effect of literacy on cognitive skills, and results showed that the skills which seemed to be learned via literacy are tied closely to the functions of the literacy.

Scribner and Jacobs at the Center for Applied Linguistics are currently investigating the uses of writing outside of school; specifically, they are defining the nature and functions of writing in industry (e.g., in a dairy plant and in a union). Preliminary results show that a single written document is used in a variety of ways by different people at different times, and thus the meaning of the writing, as well as the cognitive demands it makes on its readers, are more complex and diverse than might be thought. The relevance of research such as this for teachers is in the way it will define the kinds of writing students may need to do when they are out of school and on the job.

Language Variation and Writing

Two research projects which are studying writing in bilingual populations will be described here. Both of these projects share a sociolinguistic framework, although one is focusing on historical and comparative data from communities, and the other is gathering data from bilingual schools in New York City.

Spolsky, Englebrecht and Ortiz, at the University of New Mexico, are doing case studies of six groups: (1) Cherokee, (2) Medieval Jewish communities, (3) Navajo, (4) Northern New Mexico, (5) Aymara in the Bolivian Altiplano, and (6) Tonga. The case studies are investigating literacy in both the vernacular of the community and in the standard language. Field observations are attempting to define the nonschool-related functions of literacy within the community; then schools will be observed to see if there is congruence between their view of literacy and that of the community. The results of this research clearly will be useful both in understanding the complexity of literacy, and in facilitating the transition to literacy among linguistic minority groups.

Fishman, at Yeshiva University, is studying six schools in New York Ciy which succeed in teaching children to read and write in two languages. The six schools include a French-English school, a Greek-English school, a Hebrew-English school, a Hebrew-English-Yiddish school, a Chinese-English school, and an Armenian-English school. Over a two year period the parents, teachers and children associated with the lowest grades in these schools are being observed and interviewed. The research is attempting to clarify how much importance should be attached to school factors in the process of "biliteracy acquisition," how much to home and community factors, how much to language factors, and finally, how much to writing system characteristics. The results of this

clearly will de useful in understanding more thoroughly the influences that facilitate or hamper the ease with which children learn to read and write in two languages.

Conclusion

This article has presented an overview of past and current research on the nature of writing and its development. The overview was not exhaustive, since the intent was to provide, instead, a relatively comprehensive description of the kinds of writing research being conducted. As a program of research, these studies reflect a mix of natural and experimental settings, of different age levels and ethnic populations, and of different methodologies for data gathering and analysis. The number and variety of studies may sound ambitious, but in terms of total numbers of children and adults studied, or in terms of the number of settings in which writing has been studied, we are only scratching the surface. Much more research needs to be done if we are to have enough information to inform effectively the teaching of writing.

These studies are the beginning of a burgeoning new field. In their various ways they are creating new knowledge about the very nature of writing as it occurs in school and out, and about how writing is learned and might best be taught. First, more information about composing processes will enable us to help students when they get "bogged down" in those processes; perhaps we will be able consciously to introduce students to composing processes with which they are unfamiliar, and thus facilitate their learning to write. Second, the abundance of developmental information that will result from these and similar studies will give us baseline data on the natural course of writing development. Without such baseline data, how would we know what to expect from students at various stages of learning? Third, information about the real uses of writing outside of school will do a number of things. It will probably dispel the notion that the need for writing will disappear in an increasingly technological society. It is already apparent from current work that writing is a quite frequent activity in business and industry, and in community settings. Moreover, the diversity in kinds of writing used in these settings is remarkable. All such information on the real uses of writing in our society will enable us to enhance greatly the teaching of writing: we can tailor instruction to fit the needs and motivations of our students. Fourth, information about the effect of language variation on learning to write will enable us to teach language to minority students more effectively. Especially important here will be fuller knowledge of the variety of language resources which bilingual and bidialectal children and adults bring to the learning situation.

Efforts to understand writing and its place in our society will hopefully not only continue, but increase, building upon the foundations being laid now. Because until recently there has been virtually no knowledge with which to build teacher education courses or writing curricula, the creation of this knowledge is essential if we are to improve the teaching of writing.

NOTE: The opinions expressed are the author's own, and do not necessarily represent the official policy or position of the National Institute of Education.

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tip

Young Children and Their Writing

Diane E. DeFord
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When very young children first begin to write, there is an amazing storehouse of knowledge guiding their actions. The analysis of this knowledge base is rapidly becoming of central concern to researchers of children's writing. Hildreth (1936), Ames and Ilg (1951), Britton (1970, 1975), Graves (1975), and Clay (1975) are just a few who have explored young children's writing. Their findings leave no doubt that young children operate from a definite knowledge base. However, there is much which is still unknown about the course of children's writing development. King (1979) suggests from her review of research on early writing development that:

> What is needed is a framework for understanding how children's intentions in learning interact with varying learning contexts as they make the transition from speech to writing and, in particular, a framework that focuses on how children *develop* control over the written medium.

A recent investigation by this author of the spontaneous writing of approximately 50 two-through-seven year olds offers such a framework for understanding children's writing development. Selected writing samples will be presented which describe some consistent transitions in learning to write and the importance of children's intentions within the learning context.

The attempt at communicating shown in Figure 1 provides an example of writing one might be tempted to dismiss as mere scribbling. However, as Jenny read what she had written, it became clear that her intent was to produce the following letter to her teacher:

> Dear Ms. Baker,
>
> I am going to move. I won't be seeing you next week. I hope I'll see you at Christmas. I like you a lot.
>
> Charley W. (her cat)

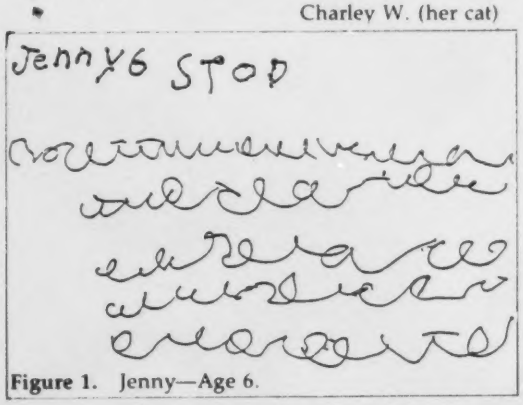

Figure 1. Jenny—Age 6.

This message is well formed, functionally appropriate and meaningful. Jenny indicates she has control of the function of written language, the structure of a particular written form, and a sense of appropriateness of language in a meaningful setting. Even though she shows little control of the letters of the alphabet, her writing does illustrate control of some even more basic rules. Jenny knows that: (1) our symbol system is written in a linear, horizontal fashion utilizing top to bottom directionality and left-to-right motion; (2) there is rhythm and flow to written language; and (3) that letters as a form of communication must follow a specific format.

This sample illustrates that while children's writing may be unconventional, it is *not* random or disorganized. In the same way that young babies at six months are babbling, already having selected a repertoire of phonemes used in the language environment in which they live, so do writers begin to organize their world of print. This developmental process parallels oral language development and is initiated in the same way: through living and growing in a meaningful, print oriented society. It is necessary then to examine salient features of that learning environment.

The Learning Setting

Purpose is central to written language in use. The intentions of the writer as well as the reader initiate communication through reading and writing. The messages in a young child's life are constantly present and yet varied. Store signs, road signs, product labels, billboards, newspapers, magazines, books and Sesame Street occur in various settings and offer initial encounters with visible language which the child begins to organize according to purpose, thereby making differentiations in meaningful ways.

The most important element within this environment is the social situational context. The very young child may not be able to relate to *STOP* written in black letters on a piece of paper with an appropriate oral response *STOP*. However, the situational cues in the red sign with white letters *at* an intersection where Mommy and Daddy always stop allow the growing child to understand the function of the sign and react to it. The father who hurriedly goes through a neighborhood stop sign and then listens to his four year old say, "I'm going to tell Mommy you didn't stop at the sign" is full witness to this learning process. It is the combination of print, situational cues and an appropriate, meaningful context that aids the child in organizing this print environment. There is much, however, that a child must differentiate in order to ever begin to write the letters of the alphabet or begin to read.

The Differentiation Process

Initially, when a very young child takes pencil (or crayon) to paper and attempts to draw or write, an adult will typically think of it as only scribbling. The child, however, may very well say "That's a pumpkin." At this point, the child's control of the form of written language is not much different from the babbler's control of the form of oral language. "Ba-Ba" may be a response to everything said just as scribbling may signify whatever the child intends at the moment (the intent changing from moment to moment as well). But, when this same child begins to bring subsequent attempts to a parent with the command "Read it to me," the basic function of writing is set. When the child makes the distinction between what is "drawing" and what is "writing," many rules that govern our use of written language rapidly follow.

Kara, for example, at two years of age barely controls the movements required by the task of drawing her family (Figure 2a) and writing her name (Figure 2b).

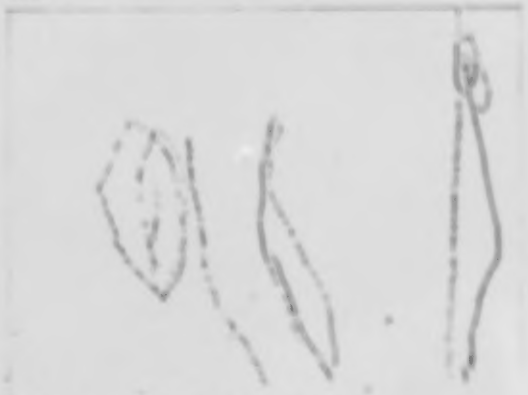

Figure 2a. Kara—Age 2: family

Figure 2b. Kara's name

Bobby, on the other hand, has enough physical control at three years to make his understanding of the basic distinction between drawing and writing very clear (see Figure 5). Physical control aside, both writers show that what they do for writing is different from what they do for drawing (the basis of the sign concept [Clay, 1975], that signs and letter-like shapes carry messages).

Figure 5. Bobby — Age 3 — while writing at bottom says, "There's a snowman and a man driving a helicopter."

The form of their writing is also taking shape. While Kara's name is randomly placed on the page, there is symmetry to the symbols, uniformity of size and shape, and a symbol-like quality to her writing — very different from scribbling. She even begins to show that each symbol has an inner complexity. Bobby shows left to right directionality, linearity (linear mark writing [Clay, 1975]), uniformity of size and shape, appropriate placement (page and book arrangement principle, [Clay, 1975]), and a sense of conveying a message while writing (Bobby read, "There's a snowman and a man driving a helicopter.").

Rules such as linearity, uniformity, placement and directionality are formed at an early age, although many of them will swing in and out of conventional use between the age of two and seven. However, the fact that our symbol system is made up of lines and circles, in various combinations, is a permanent and lasting concept. Buffy, age 3, understands all of the concepts that Kara and Bobby do, but has moved further on in the process of differentiation by limiting her symbol repertoire to circles (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Buffy — Age 3 — drawing a picture and writing about it.

To illustrate the importance of the social context in the child's concept development, it is necessary to look at a child growing up in another culture which operates with a different set of conventions. A three year old, who is growing up in China, writes her name as in Figure 7a.

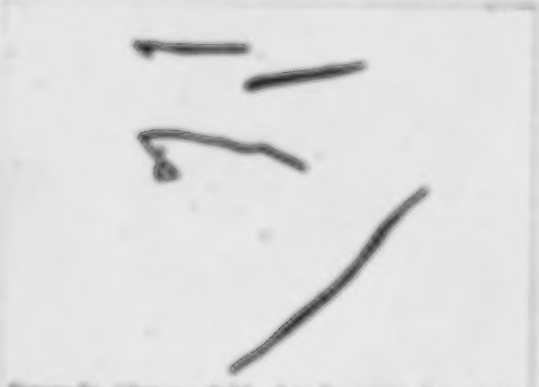

Figure 7a. Chinese child — Age 3 — writing her name

Since the conventional directionality of Chinese script is top to bottom, right to left in a vertical fashion, it's not too unusual that the description of her picture

would follow the same conventions (Figure 5b), or that her writing would look like a Chinese character in form. This demonstrates that the child's rule inferencing is consistent with the rules utilized within the symbol system in prominence around her.

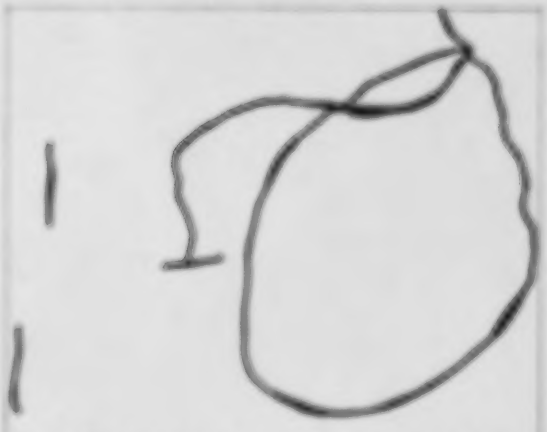

Figure 5b. Chinese child drawing a picture and writing about it (vertical lines to left of picture).

With this particular child, her understanding of symbol systems has been expanded because of exposure to another system. She has seen her American friend, Margot, write in English, and can represent this different system as well (Figure 5c). Note the resemblance to Buffy's writing.

Figure 5c. Same child writing a note to friend, Margot.

When the child's attention turns from the more global understandings to attend to letter characteristics, the form begins to look more and more conventional. Jimmy, age 5, and Chad, age 6, show this growing specificity. (Figures 6 and 7).

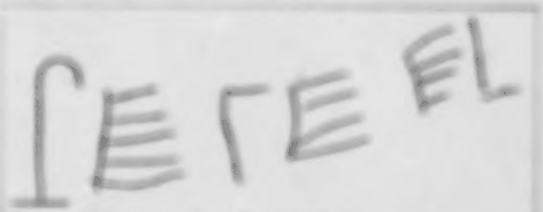

Figure 6. Jimmy—Age 5: writing his name.

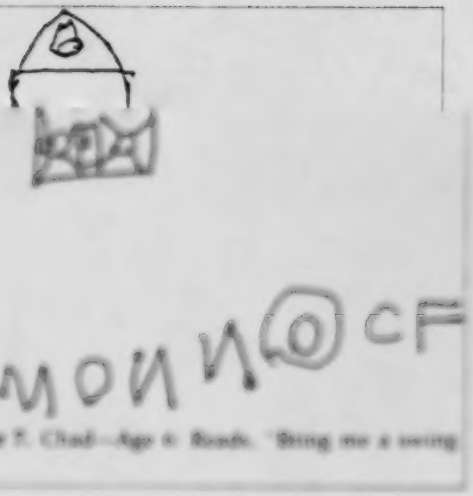

Figure 7. Chad—Age 6: Reads, "Bring me a swing set."

In all of these endeavors, the urge to write and become increasingly more proficient so that others can "read" it is a continuing force which propels the writer on to greater and greater attempts. Invariably, once children know there is interest in their writing, they will return time and time again to the interested party, producing sample after sample. It is in this way that practice is important. Each self initiated attempt consistently explores and broadens their developing concepts of how print communicates in our society. Independent play (Figure 6) and shared play (Figures 5b and 6b) are extremely important when it is child initiated.

Other attempts at writing illustrate how hard it is to negotiate all of the variables of which the writers are becoming aware. Once the form of letters is under control, and even before, words and other units necessitate attention. Many times, the convention of spacing between words is the most slippery of all. The sounds of letters in oral language sometimes go on the word before, or sound like they should go with the next word. Children may represent this phenomenon in their written communications (Figure 8). At other times, the message is all run together, or the conventional writing space is filled before the message is complete. If a whole new concepts are being explored or even in learning more about how to deal with known concepts of writing, flat-seeming violations of rules already known may occur. Vertical writing and bottom to top directionality are not too unusual.

The other conventions of spelling, punctuation and form of discourse are constantly being dealt with in an active, logical manner as well. Pam, age 7, systematically writes, "I have some fish. I keep them in a tank." (Figure 11) and then looks at her writing to say

"It doesn't look right." She then inserts a period at the end of the second line, producing a piece which looks more like something out of her basal reading series than conventional lang[illegible]. The learning setting shows its influence at this point.

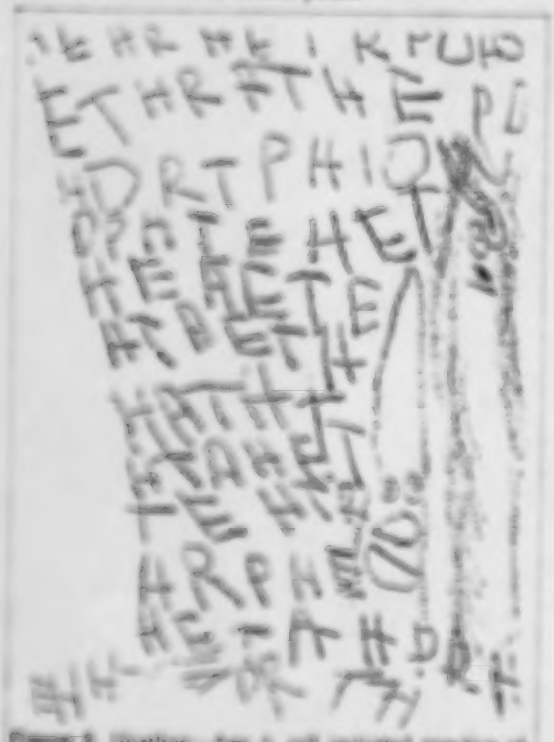

Figure 9. Heather—Age 4: self-initiated practice of letters

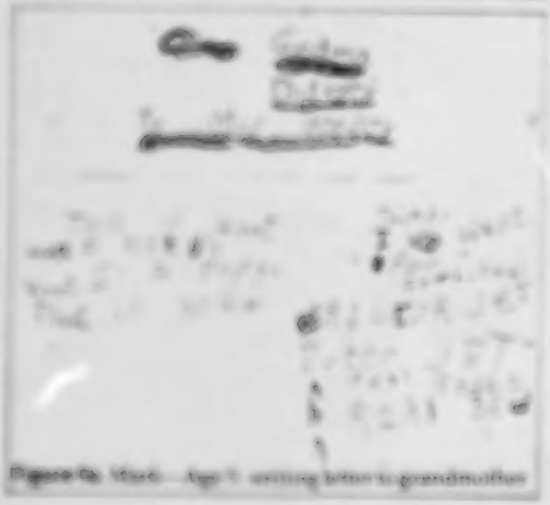

Figure 10. Mark—Age 5: writing letter to grandmother

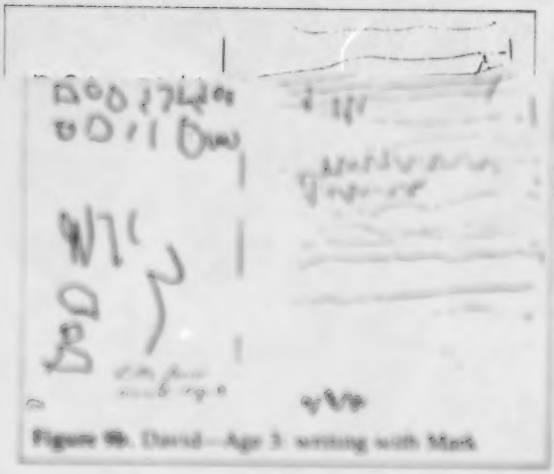

Figure 9b. David—Age 3: writing with Mark

Figure 10. Preschooler—Age 5: one page from book typed by child. "Leonard's time machine goes to the place of the flying monsters."

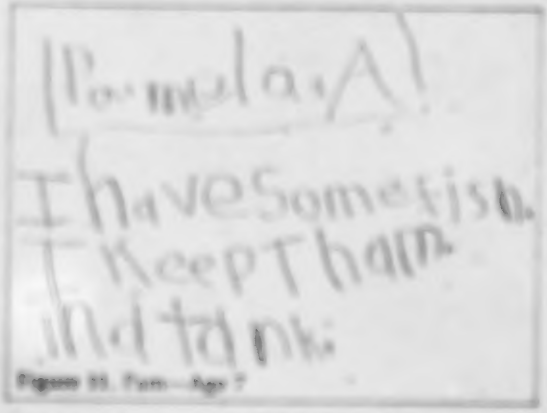

Figure 11. Pam—Age 7

Pam illustrates the continuing process of differentiation in several ways. Her sense of spelling is constantly being revised, moving closer to conventional forms. Conventional use of punctuation is explored, all with a sense of "rightness." She indicates that her growing sophistication is guided by personal interactions with print in the environment and through books. Most of the samples suggest that whatever models are available to these young writers will serve to guide their developing concepts of print in use.

Gaining Control of Written Language

The evidence suggests that learning to write is initiated tacitly, as is oral language. As children move toward learning specified forms, they organize print in their environment and learn generalized communication strategies. The young authors presented within this paper actively explored rules governing the concepts of letters, words, sentences and forms of discourse. Their communication strategies reflected a movement from global to more differentiated concepts of print, concern for letters or words as units grew out of attempts to communicate complete messages. This phenomenon makes a linear description of development impossible, since children may utilize a sentence or message format while exhibiting little control of letters and words. With this in mind, the following stages are set forth as a framework for understanding children's development of writing:

1. Scribbling
2. Differentiation between drawing and writing
3. Concepts of linearity, uniformity, inner complexity, symmetry, placement, left-to-right motion, and top to bottom directionality
4. Development of letters and letter-like shapes
5. Combination of letters, possibly with spaces, indicating understanding of units (letters, words, sentences), but may not show letter-sound correspondence
6. Writing known isolated words—developing sound-letter correspondence
7. Writing simple sentences with use of invented spellings
8. Combining two or more sentences to express complete thoughts
9. Control of punctuation—periods, capitalization, use of upper and lower case letters
10. Form of discourse—stories, information material, letters, etc.

While the above stages are not sequential, there is a suggestion of growing sophistication as more of the child's strategies and concepts become refined, reflecting conventions of written language.

The writing data collected over the last several years by Chomsky (1970), Clay (1975), Downing (1972), Read (1975), Stein (1978), Applebee (1979) and others suggests that key elements in children's learning about writing are a rich, meaningful print environment, varied opportunities for individual exploration, and a willing, supportive audience. It may be that the strategies and concepts that children learn before entering school are necessary prerequisites to being able to deal on an abstract level with writing for writing's sake. Because of this, writing for the initial learner should not be limited to a point in time when they control letter form, spelling conventions, spacing and form of discourse. They need opportunities to explore writing as a means of learning about writing. If educators seek to understand the organization children bring to the process, along with their intent to mean, language learning and communication will be fostered.

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Learning How to Mean in Written Language

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Children arrive at school already knowing how to express meanings in oral language. Long before compulsory school begins, unless suffering some severe pathology, they learn to talk and to use language to communicate with people in their home environments. But in learning to talk, they have acquired much more than words and syntax; they have learned what things mean and how to express their personal meanings to others. Language becomes the primary medium through which children encode experience, represent reality to themselves, and express their personal meanings to others.

Children learn language by using it in the habitual and repetitive actions of daily life that include the early peek-a-boo-type games and the common rituals associated with dressing, eating and bathing. As toddlers they accompany parents in the everyday routines of housekeeping—"assisting" with such things as bed making, preparing meals, putting away toys and clothing. Language and action are intertwined as mother says "Help me pull the sheets straight," or "Let's pick up the papers." The child is constructing a language system, but not alone; the mother—or caretaker—gives close attention, tracks his interests, gives support and supplies wording to the actions.

Since they have learned language through action and use, children tend to view it as functional, a useful means of satisfying their basic needs—to relate to others, to get what they want, to find out what things are, to express themselves and to regulate the behavior of others. As children's experience with language grows, they shift from their earlier invented protogrammar to the rule system of the adults in their own speech community. The early uses of language are consolidated into three major functions which have been identified by Michael Halliday (1973), as interpersonal, ideational and textual.

The *interpersonal function* is the participatory function and is used in relating to and communicating with others. It is person oriented, the speaker adopts a set of communication roles, expresses attitudes and values, and reveals self to others. The second, *ideational*, is the *content function* and is referential. It enables the speaker to embody in language his experience of the real world, including experiences of the internal world of his or her own consciousness. Language in this sense is serving a thinking function, a means of organizing and expressing knowledge and certain fundamental logical relations inherent in experience (Halliday, 1973). The third, *textual*, function is instrumental to the other two and "comprises the resources that the language has for creating text—for

making a text coherent within itself, and within the context of the situation (Halliday, 1976, p. 27).

Language users create spoken and written texts which encompass both ideational and interpersonal functions; however, Halliday suggests that the interpersonal function predominates in spoken language while ideational is primary in written texts. In making the transition from creating oral to written texts children must learn the distinctions between oral and written modes of language. Many begin to make these distinctions intuitively before entering school.

In literate cultures such as ours children acquire considerable knowledge about written language and how it is used from their everyday experiences. They become aware of words and letters around them and most experience personal enjoyment and satisfaction from the stories read to them.

Children very early try to express themselves in visual signs, with the marks and scribbles that they make on any available surface — window panes, wallpaper, or food left on their plates. Vygotsky suggests that these early scribbles actually have their origin in the actions and the *gestures* the child uses to indicate meaning, and that they might be viewed as gesturing with pencil. Just as they imitate grown-ups driving a car or cooking dinner in their play, children also "play" at writing and create patterns with the symbols and signs they know.

Very soon the squiggles become diagonals and curves and then letterlike shapes and letters appear (See DeFord, this issue). For our purposes the outstanding feature of these early attempts with a pencil is that they are more than random marks: they represent children's intentions to create visual constructs and messages. Having the desire to write, children draw upon all their existing knowledge to accomplish it and in doing so, they learn more about *how* to do it!

Figures 1a and 1b show page 1 and 3 in Adelia's (5½ years) writing book. Note how quickly she moved from single letter representation to a complete utterance.

Once they get the idea of what can be done in writing, children set about discovering more and more about the process, and in so doing, often invent their own system of spelling just as during their first two years of life, they created their own system of grammar. Holly, just six in September, made a book about her vacation with illustrations of her dad's car, a picnic, the family camper, and of herself standing on a pier fishing (Figure 2). She wrote captions on each page using her invented spellings and writing the message wherever there was space.

Our knowledge of this early writing behavior is well documented by Gertrude Hildreth (1936), Marie Clay (1975), and recently other researchers. We know too from such studies as Read's (1975) and Bissex (in

Figure 1a. Page 1 in Adelia's writing book. (Reads: girl, boy, mom, dad)

Figure 1b. Page 3 in Adelia's writing book. (Reads: I saw a kite.)

Figure 2. Holly's book.

press) that the system for spelling that children devise—though not adult-like—follows discernible rules, and is logical and decodable (Also see Forester, this issue).

Tacit Knowledge of Written Language Forms

Considerable tacit learning occurs as children "play" with language and create new forms and ways of expressing meaning. Similar intuitive knowing develops as children participate with adults in enjoying pieces of literature. As they join in chanting rhymes and jingles or repeatedly share favorite poetry or stories with adults, children become sensitive to literary language and the structure of often-told tales (The Three Bears, Little Red Riding Hood); they develop a *sense* of the path stories should follow and a concept about how certain characters should behave. (For example, foxes and wolves are bad characters.) They develop an intuitive *sense of story*, an internalized schema, in much the same way they have learned the structure of other kinds of discourse—conversation, for example. Story knowledge has long been recognized as related to children's early success in reading, as proposed by Gates following his classic research in the 30s. Now we are beginning to see its relevance for early writing.

Table 1 shows the key streams of development that children bring to writing in the early years of schooling. In addition to their linguistic and story knowledge, children of course also bring their personal knowledge of the world. While linking writing to oral language, it is not my intention to imply the two processes are the same, for writing is surely more than talk written down.

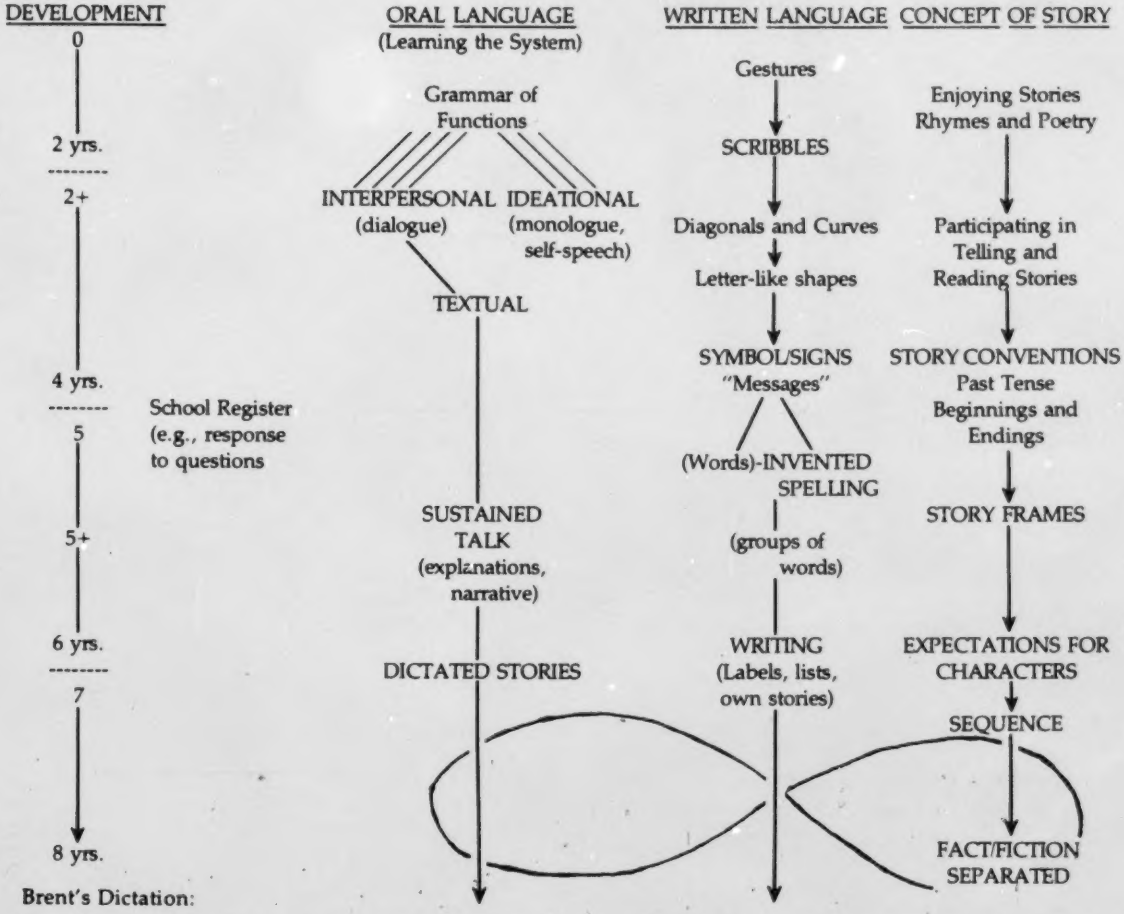
The question then arises, "How do children extend their spoken language competence to writing?" An important step is made when children begin to sense that writing is different from speech. This shift can be observed frequently in intonation and style of the stories they dictate to a scribe. Those aware of the form of written language, reveal it in the way they structure sentences, choose particular words and phrase their dictation. The two examples that follow show how two seven-year-old boys differ in their awareness of written language.

Steve's Dictation:

once upon a time there lived a princess
she lived in a pueblo
and one day she was out picking flowers
she was outside of the pueblo
and she saw a huge dragon
and started to run
but the dragon blow smoke out of his nose
shaped as a hand
and he could catch anything he wanted
so he caught her in his smoke
and said "oh kind princess would you please take
a thorn out of my foot?"
and at first she said "no"
then the dragon said "I will let you have all the
jewels in the world"
but the princess said "no"
"I always have had a thousand jewels in my kingdom"
"I have the most jewels in the world" said the
princess
but the dragon said "I will take you to a more
beautiful palace—
beautifuller than that old pueblo you live in"

(Continued to full story of 50 lines)

Table 1
Resources Children Bring to Written Discourse



Brent's Dictation:

when we went to the zoo we saw the giraffe and the zebra
and we saw the fish house with the fish in it
and we saw the zebra and the elephants kangaroos and the reindeer
and tigers and the lions and the monkeys and the giraffes and the panthers
and the black panther was fighting against the little panther
and our whole class was saying "come on panther"
"beat the other panther"
and then we went on to the lions
then when we were about to leave we went to the elephant house
and we did some writing and saw the bears

Although both boys were intending to dictate a fictive tale, only Steve is able to meet the task and use the language required in a tale. He also is able to carry on a monologue which writing demands, whereas Brent's dictation seems almost dialogic, as though he were engaged in a conversation and expected response from a partner. He is not yet able (at least in the story mode) to shift from a primary emphasis on *interpersonal* to *ideational* language function which Halliday suggests occurs when one writes.

A major problem for young writers is to get the ideas and images in their heads transformed into written language on paper. Vygotsky (1962, Cole, et al., 1978) suggests that inner speech plays an important role in the process of encoding experience and transforming thoughts and information into words and

syntax. Experience of the real world is encoded in memory in symbols that are less explicit and more abstract than uttered speech. In sharing thoughts with others in either talk or writing—but especially in writing—a child must find the wording and syntax to translate these abstract images into explicit text.

Writing presents special problems to children, and to some adults, because it is a solitary activity. A writer must maintain a flow of language and thought without the support of a conversational partner. Elementary school children's competence in language, however, is primarily in the area of conversational speech—question/answer, request/compliance, argument, anecdote, narration. All are accomplished with the aid of a respondent, involve turn-taking and are largely dependent on inputs from a conversational partner (Bereiter and Scardamalia, in press). But in writing one must go it alone. A first step toward writing is made, according to James Moffett,

> . . . when a speaker takes over a conversation and sustains some subject alone. He has started to create a solo discourse that while intended to communicate to others is less collaborative, less prompted, and less corrected by feedback than dialogue. The [speaker] bears more of the responsibility for effective communication (Moffett, 1968, p. 85).

Children learn to sustain discourse in school when they can participate in telling and retelling stories, report on important events in their lives, explain how things are done or create their own reading materials by dictating stories to the teacher or making their own books with pictures and simple text expressed in their personal invented spellings.

When the teacher writes for children, she serves as an interested and encouraging partner, as well as a medium through which the child can see his ideas emerge in visual form. Sometimes their dictations are rather meagre, resembling a list more than a text:

> One sunny day I went to the circus
> and I ate a snow cone
> a popcorn box and a cotton
> candy and some coke.

Or, they may attempt to provide some information:

> seals live in water
> but they don't always live in water
> they live in the zoo.

The teacher as an interested scribe supports the child's efforts, links into his meanings and often helps him find the needed wording.

As children continue to have exposure to an array of written language, and particularly to stories read aloud, they learn through their ears the structure of written language which begins to appear in their written stories. The writing is *expressive*, close to the author, and used to reflect on and present current interests and preoccupations, as we see in this piece by a girl just six years:

> There was once a little girl and
> She had a little red castle
> and in her castle she
> had a little bed and a
> kitchen stove and
> a rug to sit on
> and a mummy and
> daddy. her mummy
> and daddy slept in
> there bed and
> one day a mouse
> came into there
> bed they jumped
> out of bed and
> ran down stairs

Certainly this is a well-formed story showing the young author's integration of personal experience with story language, conventions and story structure. All are intertwined in the story produced.

Children's daily lives show up in their writing—family excursions, pets, TV, school outings and acquaintance with books. The next example by Caroline, just seven, represents a real happening expressed in a story frame. Longing for a pet gerbil, she wrote:

> Caroline September 5, 1978 Peewee the gerbile
>
> One day a gerbile was born in a pet
> store, he grew up very fast. The
> boys and girls came to admire him and wished
> they had money so did the gerbile.
> One day a girl came named caroline who
> was saveing up every cent of her money
> and her mother finally let her buy a gerbile.
> The gerbile was very happy Caroline named the
> gerbile Peewee. They had a lot of fun until
> one day caroline went on vacation. Peewee got
> very lonesome. Soon Caroline came back and
> played with Peewee every day. the end

Some time after completing this story, Caroline re-

ported that she actually had written it because she wanted a gerbil — and that the story had helped to gain permission from her mother to buy it!

Growth in Writing in School

Children bring vast resources to writing and some seem to take on writing in the early grades as naturally as they engage in talk. But many find writing difficult and see little value for themselves in the task. Even able writers seem to lack motivation to write very much after the second grade. To continue to write, children need to see that it does something for *them*, for them *now* as they progress through the elementary school. This poses for teachers a major shift in curriculum planning with the focus placed on enriching the global learning context and on planning learning experiences in which children will find that they *need to write in order to learn*.

Linguists increasingly are emphasizing that all language — written or spoken — is embedded in and shaped by the social/cultural situation in which it arises. It's the learning experiences under way at the time and how the teacher and children engage in them that determine the nature of the talk and writing produced. Children can represent reality to themselves and express their personal meanings to others in both spoken and written forms. Reality isn't static but the result of the dynamic interplay between the elements that make up the living situation at any one time. These elements include the situation (e.g., home/school, classroom/library), activity (drama/measuring), content (pioneers/folktales), events, the participants (teachers/students), roles and role relationships, and most significantly the *intentions* of the language users. Each and all of these variables impact on the oral and written texts produced. It's conceivable that teachers could affect children's writing, for example, simply by changing and improving role relationships in the class.

A first step is to listen to children, pay attention to what they know, and use this information to plan an environment where children can find for themselves the stimulus and motivation to expand their writing competence. One class of eight-year-olds was engaged during the autumn months in studying the natural environment near the school. They became deeply involved in collecting specimens, making sketches and taking notes of observations. It was customary to make observations as the children went to and from school and an intense interest in spiders developed. One boy, Paul, became caught up in observing a spider making a web "like a bridge from a fence" to a nearby twig. Excited by his observations, Paul would rush into school and tell what he had seen, engaging the interest of both his teacher and friends. He made notes of what he had observed and over a period of several days he put his observations into writing:

I was coming home from school and I saw a spider web. I touched it, then the spider came out and fixed its web just in time because a dragon fly flew past. It went into the web and the spider came out of its hiding place and ate the dragon fly. Then I went home and told my mom. And the next morning when I went to school I saw a spider web again and it looked like a bridge.

The writing came from Paul's own *intentions* to put his ideas into words and illustrates how children gain insight and the resources necessary to put that insight into written form. Paul had the power to *perceive;* also, he had an *engaging* experience; but his *understanding* and motivation to write that experience came from the teacher and peers who allowed him to test out his perceptions in talk.

Teachers who are successful in promoting writing in their classes start with learning experiences or broad themes which they believe contain valid and interesting content for children. They may range from a study of witches in the second grade to an exploration of a natural environment in the fourth, or an in-depth study of the Middle Ages in the sixth. The focus is on learning about the place, time or particular phenomenon. Talking and writing occur as children need to find out and *record*, organize information and *report*, make generalizations from what they have learned and *explain* and *describe* and speculate about what caused events, or might happen in the future. They also have the chance to imagine similar situations, past or future events, and write them in fictive form.

A seven-year-old deeply involved in studying witches in fiction might describe a witches' house:

Zildy

Zildy live'd in a tree house in a sycamore Right in the middel of the wood's. She would turn you into anything. She was a nice witch. She had lots of magic spells to turn you in to. The tree house she live'd in had a little roof. The tree

house had a tiny
door & window.
there were three
little steps going
down & one little
ladder too. Zildy
had lots of
patch'es on her
skert. her magic
words were diggety
dawgety ziddle dee
zump ka lumpityo
mumbo junbo ka
jellaphant zum zum
zaroot zilly zop &
skaroodle dee doo
ker snickety snaff

An older pupil might try through writing to understand what life in remote times and places was really like. In a way similar to drama, writing can be the medium through which children truly become engaged with new information, whether it comes from first hand experience (as with Paul) or through film, books, or other vicarious means. To know, one must transform new information and make it fit one's own world view. Writing can assist in the process; it allows the learner to speculate about "how things are" or "ought to be." A nine-year old studying the Middle Ages was able to shape up his knowledge about life in that distant past by walking—through writing—in the shoes of one who lived then.

A JOURNEY IN MEDIEVAL TIMES

A long long time ago in the middle ages I had to make a long Journey to stoke-newington, on half the Journey I was crying.
The reason was my Family had died in a cart crash. You see the drover got hit by a stray arrow, at least thats as far as I know and so I were left with Just that. You see in those days many people could not hire special people to solve mysteries for them. So most people had to do their own job except for old people and poor people who didn't bother to do these things.

As I was nearing stoke newington I saw this sign post, I could not read so I did not bother about it.

All of a sudden the road started to get muddy, I was stuck in the mud but I managed to get out. (Now I knew The Road Was Muddy, and The Sign tried To Tell Me). I reached the village of Stokenewington, and in doing so I was attacked and robbed in a field.

The only thing that made me happy was to know that each and every one of my family had been buried in the proper way.

In this instance Terry is using writing to help him understand some difficult concepts that he has met within the context of a larger learning theme. Other children undoubtedly were using other forms of writing to help them learn and express their newly gained understandings. Their particular topics, kinds of information and purposes influenced the kinds of writing produced. Children will learn to write and continue to write when they discover that it *does something* for them. They need to find that writing is a natural meaningful part of classroom living and learning, that attention of the class and teacher is on *what* is said, and that written language is valued for its contribution to both the learning under way and the learner.

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Examining Instructional Assumptions: The Child as Informant

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A great deal can be learned about the validity of language activities in a classroom by looking at the assumptions that lie behind those activities. While the activities may appear on the surface to be varied and creative, a closer examination often reveals that they reflect unfounded assumptions about language growth and development, which may in fact debilitate rather than facilitate the process of language literacy.

A case in point is the first grade classroom of Alison, age 6. As we will illustrate later in this article, Alison had already had a variety of experiences with written language when she began first grade. While her teacher was well intentioned, the reading and writing activities which she provided did not build upon Alison's range of experience. We would like to share with the reader some examples of these activities, as we think they are typical of the language activities found in first grades. They may even be better than those found in many classrooms, though we wish to argue that they are not good enough, because of the unfounded assumptions that lie behind them.

Identifying the Teacher's Assumptions

One of the first activities which Alison completed is that shown in Figure 1.

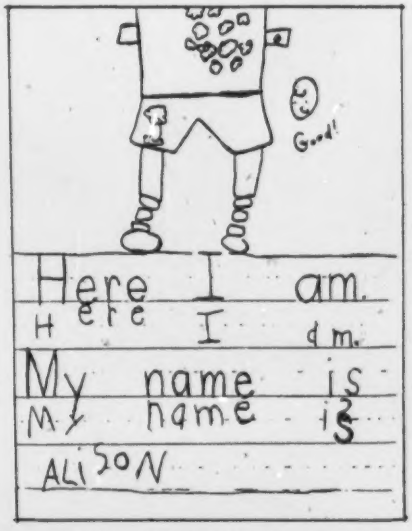

Figure 1. Underwriting (Alison, Age 6.4)

When questioned at home about why she had elected to draw the bottom half of her body, Alison re-

sponded, "It's okay, teacher said so. Someone asked and teacher said we didn't have to draw our 'whole self' if we didn't want to."

On first blush, we might think, "A creative response to a good instructional activity." But is it? After all, this was an activity designed to help children learn to control the reading/writing process. Did it do for language what it did for art? In order to answer this question it becomes necessary to examine the activity more closely. We need to identify what teacher-held assumptions underlay the creation and selection of this activity.

This is readily done by identifying the set of written language principles relative to learning which undergird this activity as opposed to other activities which might have been selected. We can easily think of both more open and more closed activities which were available options to the teacher. For example, the teacher did not elect to give the children a sheet of paper, ask them to draw a picture of themselves and then write or pretend to write an autobiographical story to share (a more open activity), nor did the teacher focus the children's attention upon an isolated letter or letter-sound correspondence pattern (a more closed activity). An analysis, then, of this activity and of the teacher's responses to it, suggests the following assumptions relative to written language learning:

Assumption 1: One of the first tasks in learning to read and write is to be able to discriminate visually the letters of the alphabet.

This is best taught by activities such as underwriting which force the child to attend to the distinctive features of each letter.

Assumption 2: Language activities designed for children should be manageable to insure completion and hence success.

One way to accomplish this is to use simple whole texts which contain a limited number of basic vocabulary items (Here I am. My name is. . .).

Assumption 3: Errors should be marked to give corrective feedback and to stop bad habits from forming. (See the teacher's correction of *s* in Figure 1).

Assumption 4: Initial language activities should be personally meaningful to the child.

This is best done by focusing on topics of interest to the child. (In this activity, the topic self).

Assumption 5: Children do not need as much support in art as they do in writing.

The incorporation of art allows for self-expression and creativity.

The question now becomes, "In order to make these assumptions, what does one have to believe?"

The more obvious belief underlying Assumption 1 is that children need to be able to note differences between the various letters of the alphabet in order to learn to read and write. Less obvious perhaps is the implicit belief that first graders do not already possess this ability to discriminate the letters of the alphabet, i.e., that visual discrimination of letters must be formally taught. Each of these beliefs merits investigation. The rampant popularity of a belief is never criterion for acceptability, but rather for testing.

A listing of further beliefs which we have identified as inherent in this single instructional activity is given below.

—Access to the reading/writing process hinges on mastery of the distinctive features of print (see Assumption 1).

—The word is the key unit in language (see Assumption 2).

—Words selected for initial instruction must be chosen on the basis of frequency of usage (see Assumption 2).

—Errors must be pointed out by a guiding adult as children do not have information which they can use for self-correction (see Assumption 3).

—The goal of early language learning is an error-free performance on basics as without this children will never be able to access the process (see Assumption 3).

—Activities which make personal sense support the child's access to basic literary processes (see Assumption 4).

—This means, in as far as language learning is concerned, that topics should be chosen carefully so that children find them personally meaningful but the actual language introduced must be carefully selected and controlled by the teacher (see Assumptions 2 and 4).

—Art is an easy activity for the child (natural); reading and writing are hard activities (unnatural) (see Assumption 5).

—Art is learned; reading and writing must be taught (see Assumption 5).

—Creativity must wait upon control. Because children have already learned the basic forms of art, i.e., they have control of the basic conventions, creativity can be expected. Once children control the conventions of written language, they can and will become creative written language users as well (see Assumption 5).

One might argue that this analysis is a highly speculative process, and infers much from a single instructional activity. To illustrate the reoccurrence of the identified language learning principles in subsequent activities, three additional activities completed during the first week of school are described.

The activity illustrated in Figure 2 is closely tied to that discussed in Figure 1. In this instance, children were given ditto master copies of story parts of which the page shown is one. The children were asked to arrange the pages in order, paste them to the blank pages of a stapled book, draw a picture to fit the text, and overwrite the script on each page. Though this assignment involves more procedures, what has been said relative to beliefs inherent in the first activity, holds for this activity too. The significant creative decisions related to the written language—the writing of the story—have been made by the teacher. The student is left to simply recreate the decreed text order and to copy the print. Only the art is left open to creative efforts of the student.

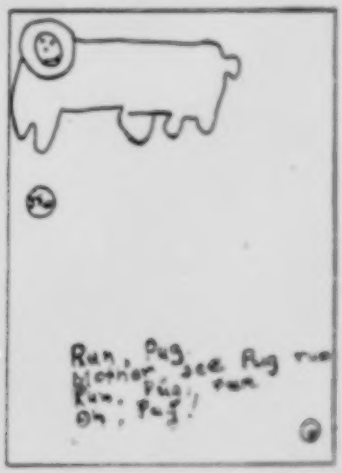

Figure 2. Overwriting (Alison, Age 6.4)

The activity which generated the product illustrated in Figure 3 initially appears somewhat different, but closer examination indicates that it too shares the beliefs reflected in the first two assignments. This assignment is a parent-teacher notice which the children were asked to copy from the blackboard and take home as a reminder of an upcoming meeting. In this instance, the teacher gave each child a sheet of lined paper with his/her name on it. Children were asked to underwrite their name twice, and then copy the message that had been written on the blackboard.

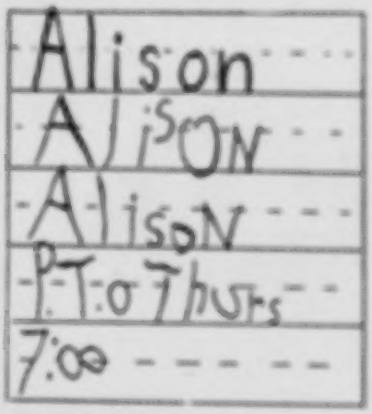

Figure 3. Copying (Alison, Age 6.4)

An analysis of the beliefs which guided this activity suggests that all of the original beliefs hold, and that a further clarification has been obtained. Presumably the teacher is concerned with how Alison spatially controls the writing of her name and feels that practice is needed. Often this concern for the child's inability to stay within the lines is predicated on the belief that handwriting signals muscle and eye coordination and that such coordination is prerequisite to learning to read and write.

Figure 4 illustrates this teacher's application of the language experience approach to teaching reading. Rather than transcribe what the children actually said, Alison's teacher transformed each new suggestion into a common pattern for the purpose of teaching the word *we* and controlling the complexity of the syntactic patterns used. After the teacher had composed this text, each child was given a ditto copy of their class-contributed "language experience story" and asked to circle the word *we* each time it appeared. While the instructional activity has changed, the underlying assumptions governing the activity remain intact from the first three lessons.

An analysis such as we have been doing is intended to indicate that what Alison's teacher believes about the reading and writing process strongly affects

both her choice of instructional activities and her handling of such activities. Her behavior is orderly, consistent and predictable. This is so in spite of the fact that she maintains she is eclectic and applies "a variety of approaches to the teaching of reading." Despite supposed surface structure variety in activities, her invariant assumptions continue to show.

From data such as this, we have come to believe that looking at teacher behavior in terms of the beliefs held and assumptions made is a more cogent and powerful one than looking at behavior in terms of the supposed approach being used (Harste and Burke, 1977). This teacher presumably changes approaches, but because she has not changed beliefs, her classroom practice is unaffected (as is, in all likelihood, the outcome of her instruction, but that's another equally important and complex issue which we will not develop in this paper).

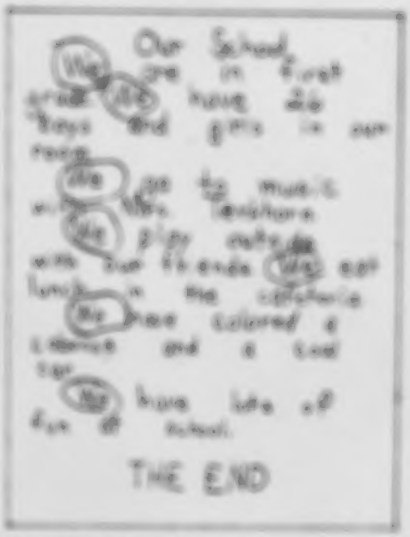

Figure 6. Class-Contributed "Language Experience Story" (Alison, Age 6.6)

These data support the position that the teaching of reading and writing is theoretically based—that each of us as teachers has a theory of how to teach reading and writing in our heads which strongly affects our perception and behavior. We define theory simply as a set of interrelated beliefs and assumptions through which perception and behavior are governed. What this means practically is that in order to change behavior we must change beliefs. To that end we now turn to an examination of language encounters which Alison has had prior to and outside her school related experiences.

Identifying the Language Learner's Assumptions

Reading Alison, we wish to argue, has been a user of written language for a long time now. One of the earliest instances of Alison's use of written language occurred when she was three years old. At the time, Alison and her family were on the way to the zoo. As they approached the beltway which would take them to the zoo, Alison's father, pointing to an overhead sign signaling "West 495," asked, "Alison, what do you think that says?"

Alison responded, "It says . . . uh . . . Daddy, turn right here to go to the zoo."

While some might argue this isn't reading, we wish to disagree. Alison has made a decision which puts her in the semantic ball park. She assumes that the print out there relates to the activity in which she and her family is engaged. And she's right in all but the strictest sense. Alison's response demonstrates her expectation that written language will be meaningful. We do not know how or when children come to this important conclusion. All we know is that children as young as three have already made it, and that somehow readers who end up in remedial classes have lost or lost faith in it.

We believe it is through the expectation that written language will make sense that control is gained. Once the sense-making intent of written language has been perceived, ideation and hypothesis-making become the process focus of control. To further illustrate this point we can share another one of Alison's early encounters with print. This encounter occurred on a "dessert trip" to Baskin-Robbins. She was four years old at the time.

After eating her ice cream cone, Alison looked around the room attempting to find a trash can in which to deposit her napkin. After exploring logical locations, she found it, studied the wooden flap engraved with the word *push*, performed the required action, and deposited her napkin. Alison's mother, who had been observing her problem-solving behaviors, now asked, "Alison, what does that say on the trash can?"

"Push," came the response.

"How do you know?" was her mother's next question, to which Alison took her index finger and ran it over the *p*, the *u*, the *s*, and the *h* in turn, and responded, "Because it's got all the right letters!"

It was from knowing what written language does that Alison had grown in her control of the form. From earlier cognitive decisions such as that illustrated in the trip to the zoo, which put her in the semantic ball park, she could and did test language hypotheses which put her—to carry the metaphor another step—

not only on how, but give her the meta-linguistic control to speak about the game itself.

The importance of this process of on-going hypothesis testing is best illustrated by yet another language story. Alison was four years, one month at the time. In this instance she was shown a Wendy's cup and asked, "What do you think this says?"

Alison responded, running her finger under the word Wendy's: "Wendy's" and running her finger under the word hamburgers: "cup." Alison paused a moment after producing her response, as if in reflection, and added, "That's a long word with a short sound."

In this instance, the hypothesis which Alison has formulated relative to graphic-sound correspondence is an incorrect one. Yet, her very mention of it signals us to the fact that she has also formulated the correct alternative and was attempting to orchestrate this decision with the sense-making intent she knew existed. Need we help her? Not in a traditional corrective sense. All we need is to ensure that she have continuing encounters with the process, for each encounter will allow her to test out the validity of her current hypotheses and to reconstruct a new set at a level far above our assumptive imaginations.

Alison was reading before she went to first grade. Her mother, through the use of standardized tests, has placed her at the preprimer level. At home she reads such texts as *The Cozzy Bugs*, (Charlie Brown School, 1976.) She is likely not to encounter appropriate print settings in school until fourth grade.

Why the discrepancy? It's from assumptions again. The texts Alison has taken to school strip language of its context, forcing her to deal with letters and words not only outside a supportive linguistic environment, but also outside a supportive context of situation. Without the latter, Alison has neither a point of anticipation, nor a point of contextualization.

Written language learning is a social event of some complexity and written language can reflect the orchestration of this complex social event. Both the complexity and the orchestration support the development of user control. Knowing Alison as the reader she is would have her production of a book-reader-in-writing (as illustrated in Figure 1) a possible event unless one gives up the assumption that control of form is prerequisite to the language process. It is because Alison is, and has been, a reader and writer that she has a growing control of its form, not vice versa.

Writing, Alison is, and has been, as impressive a writer as she is a reader. Her explorations of written language began long before what was produced became representational in any adult sense. What Alison was motivated in her movement into writing is that children must encounter the language process in its completeness in order to learn control. As with reading, it was Alison's early access to what written language does that allowed her control.

At four years, three months, Alison encountered a wordless book and made up an appropriate story. The next morning in wanting to reread the book she asked, "What was that story I read last night?"

"Well, I'm sure I don't know. If you want to remember your stories, you need to write them down. Then you can reread them whenever you want to."

Alison's story in Figure 1 about Daddy coming home and taking the family to McDonald's was plentiful using the letters of her name simply individ-

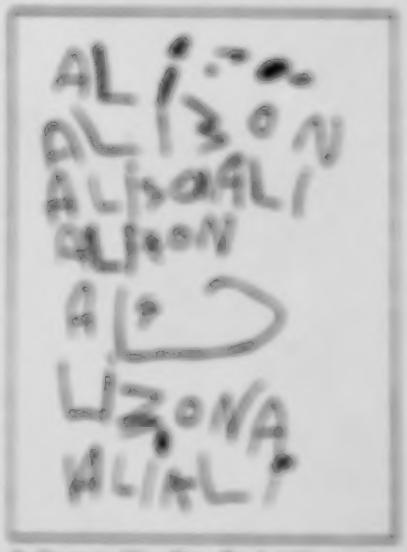

Figure 1. Story in Wordless Book (Alison, Age 4.3)

ual in order. For months, whenever she encountered this book, she would get her paper out and faithfully read this text with minor variation:

> One day Daddy came home and he said, "Hi family, I'm home," and he's gonna take us to McDonald's. I'm gonna have a fun meal.

This example illustrates Alison's public announcement of her discovery of the basic symbol system in written language, namely, one continuously re-orchestrates the same set of letters to produce an infinite set of words. Alison, as was always the case, demonstrated this growth using print of high personal worth—in this instance, her name. As in read-

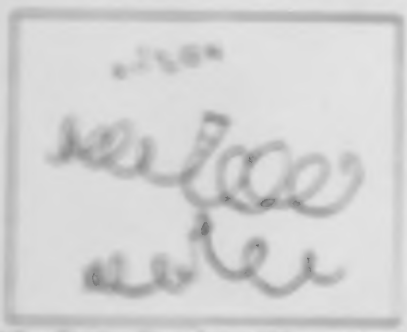

Figure 6. Cursive-Style Script (Alison, Age 6.8)

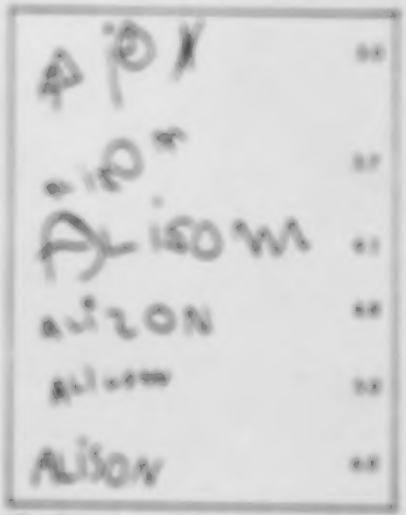

Figure 7. Signatures (Alison)

interesting signature is not her first or last, but one she experimented with during a two week period shortly after she turned five years of age. At this point, Alison wrote her name adding a s in the middle. When asked why she added the s, she replied, "Because I wanted to." After several weeks of experimenting with this signature, she abandoned it in favor of the spelling her parents had elected at birth.

Isn't it fascinating? Everything Alison had discovered about print compelled her to see that there ought to be an s in her name. And there well could be. It was one of the options her parents could have taken when they selected the original spelling of her name.

Alison feels comfortable with what she's discovered about how print operates. Like all of us, she's satisfied and interested in her latest discovery and runs it on for it. Similar trends will be seen in the writing of all of us—a favorite word, a favorite syntactic pattern, a favorite organizational style. The issue is not so much what is being tested or how much conventional congruency is achieved, but that the universality of growth, and in, and continued growth is expressed.

At five and one half Alison made a finger puppet out of paper and was asked to make a smiling face and to write about something that made her happy. She produced the product illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Finger Puppet (Alison, Age 5.6)

Without apparent warning, Alison moved so naturally from the writing illustrated in Figure 6 to that represented in Figure 8 that her behavior quite shocks us. She has been writing in this latter fashion ever since.

Alison's What Makes Me Happy ("Me I C FLOWRS"—When I see flowers) is an impressive display of rule-governed and orchestrated behavior. The message is the product of an integrated processing of pragmatics (used appropriate language in this setting), semantics (said something which makes personal sense), syntax (managed to capture the flow of her thought on paper using the standard conventional form of sentence), and graphics (abstracted out salient letter-sound relationships which undergird written language and placeholds these relationships with letter forms). Given such a magnificent breakthrough, we find it quite frustrating that the only comment made by one professional with whom we shared this piece was that her "M's were upside down."

On her sixth birthday, Alison wrote her grandmother a letter thanking her for the present which she had received (Figure 9). Once again her knowledge of

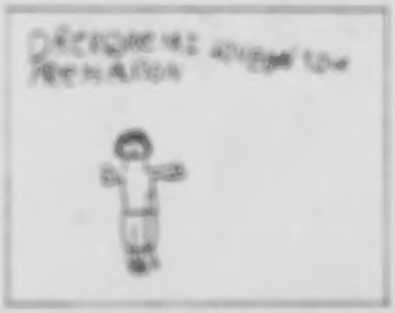

Figure 9. Letter to Grandmother (Alison, Age 6.0). "Dear Grandma, I loved your present. Alison."

written language is extensive, showing a complex mapping of letter-sound relationships, syntax, and meaning. When her writing in this instance is compared with that done on the puppet, it becomes clear Alison also has some awareness of the function of written language in alternate settings. That is, her letter sounds like a letter while the message on her puppet was a response to the implied lead, "What makes me happy . . ." Note also Alison's conventional spellings of *loved* and *your*, indicating that she is not only using a phonetic mapping in her spelling, but a visual memory of what these words look like. Alison orchestrates these elements so smoothly that they go easily undetected as the magnificent achievements which they are. The fact that such phenomena are acted out so readily by children at

such an early age leads us and others to conclude that "writing is natural" (Goodman and Goodman, 1976).

Alison's behavior here is a vivid display of the interrelatedness of reading and writing. It is through having encountered the *words loved* and *your in reading* that Alison fine-tunes her writing strategies. Alison simultaneously orchestrated spelling the way it sounds, spelling the way it looks, and spelling the way it means. All of the growth illustrated in the examples above occurred prior to Alison's entrance into first grade, yet the growth was untapped in the instructional activities which Alison's teacher provided for her.

On the occasion of Alison's return from school with the written product shown in Figure 10, she was given a piece of paper and asked to write, "Here is my house and family," the very script which she had underwritten on the school worksheet. Alison, we lamentingly report, burst into tears and said, "I can't write." After comforting she was told, "Sure you can, you've been writing a long time now."

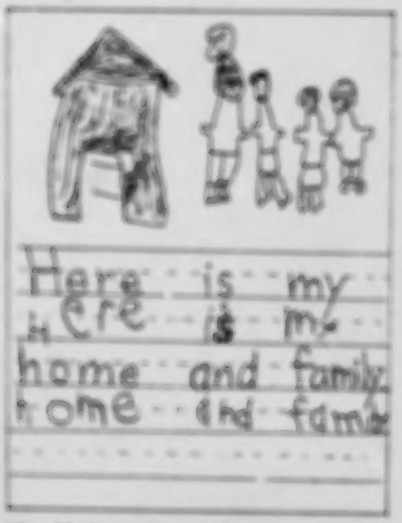

Figure 10. Underwriting (Alison, Age 6.4)

"But I don't know how to spell and write good," came the still tearful reply.

"Oh, yes you do. You're only in first grade. If your writing looked like ours, there would be no reason for you to be there. You know we can read anything you write."

With this Alison produced the text illustrated in Figure 11.

You, we hope, will say with us, "How sad that Alison had to have this moment of doubt."

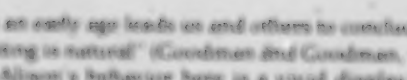

Figure 11. Uninterrupted Writing (Alison, Age 6.4)

Her assumptions did not match the instructional assumptions being addressed and hence she decided she was wrong. In this instance instruction was a debilitating rather than a facilitating experience.

Conclusion

Data collected from Alison and some 67 other three, four, five, and six year olds (Harste, Burke, and Woodward, 1977; Woodward, in progress; Harste, Burke, and Woodward, in press) leads us to conclude that many of the instructional assumptions currently made are faulty at best and debilitating at worst. In no instance—and our data has been collected from high, middle, and low SES, black and white, boys and girls, small town and urban inner-city—would the assumptions underlying Alison's instruction have been appropriate ones from which to operate instructionally.

The error in the instruction provided by Alison's teacher — as that the instructional assumptions were never tested through the provision of open-entry student activities which could provide alternate data and lead the teacher to challenge her own beliefs. All of the activities given to Alison by her teacher effectively forced Alison to operate within the teacher's assumptive bounds, never providing her the opportunity to demonstrate what decisions she as a language user was interested in and capable of making.

What we recommend instructionally for both teacher and pupil is open-entry language activities where constraints are allowed to evolve in a risk-free language environment, where each (both teacher and pupil) can go beyond their assumptions. In many ways the real issue which this paper addresses is whose written language assumptions should be tested—the teacher's or the language user's.

It's not that assumptions are bad. It is in fact our professional right and responsibility to make and have them. But it's also our professional responsibility to self-examine them. It is only in knowing ourselves and what assumptions we hold that we can begin to challenge them and grow. What is true for the language learner is true for the language teacher.

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tip

First Graders Can Write: Focus on Communication

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Writing is an ongoing, everyday activity in my first grade classroom at George P. Way Elementary School in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Designed to foster whole language development, the classroom is populated with normal children representing varying abilities, diverse interests and experiences and several ethnic origins. Writing is happening everywhere, but not as an isolated phenomenon. There is no "writing period" with a specific planned activity. Instead children are writing as they need to write, when writing fulfills a particular purpose. At the same time, listening, speaking and reading are also developing as real situations arise.

A look around the classroom on a February morning reflects the variety of reading and writing activity that is taking place. Child-authored books line a shelf in the writing center and Valentine hearts, strung from the ceiling, contain hand written messages, "Be My Valentine," "I Lv U," "Love." The calendar records the days and months along with "ets snoeg," "Valentine's Day" and "gym." Notes are waiting in several mailboxes.

Children enter the room and begin to write in their notebooks. Anika records February 12 on the chalkboard and writes underneath, "We cat wait for Valentine's Day." Shawn takes out his letter to Tomie de Paolo and begins to work on it. Tiffany reads her notes from the teacher and her friend, then puts a note in the teacher's mailbox.

Books in various stages are being worked on — Jennifer is writing a rough draft, Mike signs up for a conference to discuss his manuscript and Jon makes pictures for his book. Several children discuss plans for a tape recording to accompany a classroom book.

The classroom has print in every place you look. There is a reading collection of 2000 books, and magazines are available for self selection. Signs and charts provide information to keep schedules running smoothly. A store has household products offered for "purchase." Math games are stored in a wooden bookcase with directions on the cover of each game.

In this setting, the four forms of language — listening, speaking, writing and reading — are interactive and mutually supportive of each other in a literate environment. The speaker talks to a listening audience at sharing time, children listen to a written story read orally and readers silently read what writers have written. They are actively using language as they explore materials and participate in classroom activities (Milz, 1980).

Language Strengths

When children enter my classroom in September, they give evidence to the conclusion of child language studies that "virtually all children by five or six arrive at school able to speak their native language" (Bloom 1970, p. 225). They have learned to talk easily and naturally in their homes and neighborhoods. They are able to carry on a meaningful conversation with other children and me though their speech is not as developed as an adult's. Mandy has not mastered the use of all blends—a word like *spell* is "pell" as she asks for help in writing a word. Suzie relates, "I goed to Strohs for lunch," after she returns from having lunch with her mom. Francis, with tears and gestures, says "Miss Milz" and "lunch" as he surrounds these with Indonesian words. He has his milk money but realizes he has forgotten his lunch. When he talks to his mom on the phone, he happily uses Indonesian only. Each child is continuing to develop oral language as they use it. Francis is learning a second language as he begins to communicate with me and his classmates. Children talk as needs arise, but they do not need exercises to develop talking. I understand their meaning and am able to respond to it as I share the same social setting. R. Van Allen (1976, p. 12) states:

> If a child can acquire meaningful and communicative oral language without "talking lessons" that same child can relate to the printed forms of language without reading (and writing) lessons.

It is this natural language learning that I want to foster and further extend as children develop literacy in my classroom.

Writing to Communicate

Researchers Kenneth and Yetta Goodman (1976, p.3) believe children can learn to read and write as easily as they learned to speak and listen. They state that "language learning whether oral or written is motivated by the need to communicate." Writing samples collected by Read and Bissex show the child's desire to communicate in this form. Charles Read (1975, p.30) studied writing by children as young as three years old. The children did not write isolated words, but "every variety of writing from letters and stories, to protests to parents to prayers." Bissex (in press) noted that as her son Paul began to write, his main interest was not in just spelling words, but in writing messages. She stated, "He cared about *what* he wrote—not just *how* he wrote it." This desire to write a message—to communicate a thought in writing—is present in first graders. They do not need writing exercises to help them learn to write. Instead, form and the conventions of writing emerge as the child writes whole messages with a legitimate social function. They choose subjects that they are interested in and put the information into notes, letters, journals and stories when given the opportunity to do so.

In my class writing begins even before the first day of school. As soon as I know the names of children who will be in my room, I send a post card to their home, even though I realize most will not be able to read it themselves. It may say:

> Dear Brad,
>
> Guess what? Mr. Empson just told me that you are going to be in my class this year.
>
> I can't wait to meet you. On Tuesday, I will be in our room. Please come to Room 14 and visit with me.
>
> Love,
> Miss Milz

Many children do come to visit. While they are there I show them a mailbox which will belong to them as well as one that belongs to me. A second note is inside:

> Dear Brad,
>
> I am happy to meet you. I like you.
>
> Love,
> Miss Milz

The first day of school, I usually find several notes from my new students (see Figure 1).

The responses all suggest that the children are concerned with the meaning of the message they wish to send. Getting mail is fun and they are learning to write as they do it—Jennifer already uses a formal *Dear Miss Milz*. As children write more notes, their writing grows because of what it has to say. Each time a child gets a note or letter they internalize new information as they interact with print. They do not copy a note from someone and return it. Instead they sort out the information they need and write a new creation. The way they speak has an influence on their writing. For example, Jennifer writes in a recent note to me, "We got a new boy in are class. Do you like hem?" Children in the Michigan area pronounce *our* as *are* and it frequently can be found in their writing. Her spelling of *hem* for *him* is a categorization based on the way Jennifer articulates the short *i* sound, a relationship first noted by Charles Read (1975). Punctuation

begins to appear: "I cype your ledr's, Do you cype mine." The marks reflect a growing awareness, though they are not always in conventional places.

Correspondence. Penpals can extend the child's audience beyond teacher and classmates. Parents are often the first to be asked to fill this role as I suggest they put a note in their child's lunchbox. They are pleased to find that children will return their notes with a new message on the back. First graders can write to children of any grade level as well as adults. My present class writes to first, third and sixth graders. In previous years, the children have correspond-

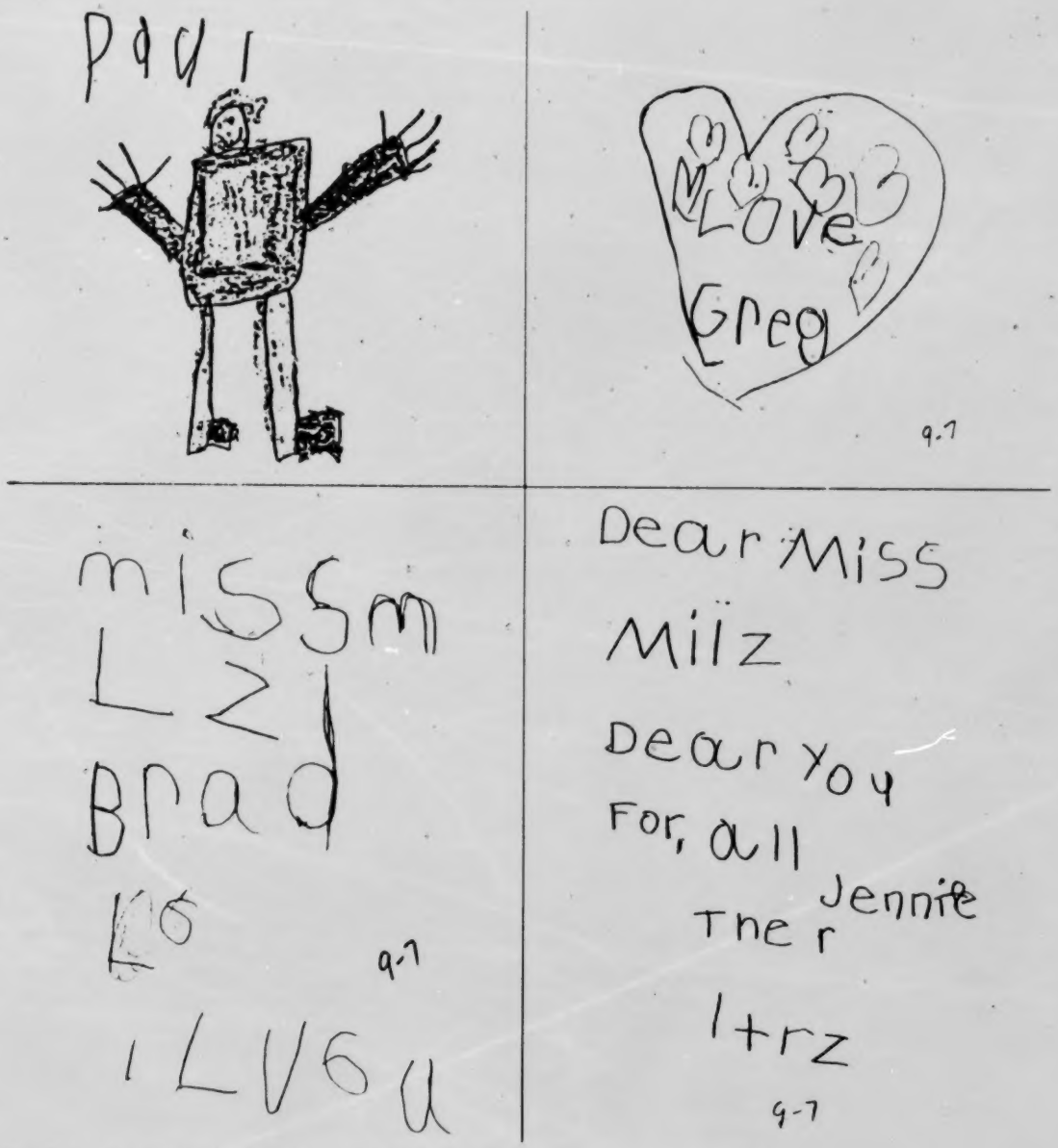

Figure 1. Notes from students on the first day of school.

ed with university students preparing to become teachers. Usually they write a letter to someone at least once a week. As they are learning to write, they are continually exploring new ways to express meanings:

January 11

dir Patrick my birthday is on April 28 and i like tyrannosaurus tyrannosaurus-rex is a dinosaur. I orso seen star trak the moove. url frad shole donald	Dear Patrick My birthday is on April 28 and I like Tyrannosaurus. Tyrannosaurus Rex is a dinosaur. I also seen Star Trek the movie. Your friend truly, Donald

First grade letters can provide a starting point for discussion by the older students that receive them. Our sixth grade penpals have looked at invented spellings by my class. They are tracing the growing knowledge of the first graders, and are amazed at their increasing proficiency since the correspondence began. It has caused the sixth graders to look at their own spellings and to analyze what they are doing themselves. These students have noticed how some words are used more frequently than others, and these words are spelled conventionally sooner and more consistently. By underlining the conventionally-spelled words, they are able to note Jennifer's increasing control of spelling:

October 22

I had lts tf ftn to da	I had lots of fun today.

February 20

I like you. I cype your letr's. do you cype mine. I hope you do.	I like you I keep your letters. Do you keep mine? I hope you do.

Personal Journals. Another form of writing which emerges in the first grade classroom is the journal entry. After a few days of school, each child is given an 8½-by-11 spiral notebook to be used as a personal journal. They may use it as they wish and each day I read their notebook and respond in writing to the meaning of the message, if appropriate. I do not make corrections, but sometimes I place notes in the margin for adult understanding. These notes are usually ignored by the child. Once the pages are filled, the notebook is sent home. Each child usually completes one notebook and some will use five or six in a school year. There is mounting excitement when a child is near the completion of the notebook, and a larger amount of writing than usual often results:

February 8

I have 11 more pages
TO go in my
noTe Book I am
glad I like
yellow. I am going
To geT a yellow
noTe Book next.

Journal pages fulfill many functions. The work of Michael Halliday (1975, p. 244) helps provide insight into these language functions. He presents seven functions of language which children acquire before they come to school. He believes they develop in approximately this order as the child is learning to speak:

Instrumental	I want
Regulatory	Do as I tell you
Interactional	Me and you
Personal	Here I come
Heuristic	Tell me why
Imaginative	Let's pretend
Informative	I've got something to tell you

At the time of first grade, children have experienced development of these functions in oral language, and can use them as they develop the form of written language. There is no hierarchy at this time, but several of the functions predominate and overlap as children communicate in writing. Many of the pages in journals contain inventories of the things and people that children like. Dana writes this way using a *personal* function:

February 12

I like 1980.
I like Me.
I like you.
I like 1 red.

Jennifer's writing is also *personal,* and reflects things happening in her daily life:

October 5

ToNit me and My dad are goen to The Eden and prases We wll hav los of fan Jasd me and my dad	Tonight me and my dad are going to the Indian Princesses We will have lots of fun— just me and my Dad.

As I respond to the meaning of their messages, the writing becomes *interactional* in its function. The child begins to ask direct questions:

December 17

Satna is nis he likes me Do you like me I Do. lat me no ples will you lat me no.	Santa is nice. He likes me. Do you like me? I do. Let me know. Please will you let me know.

I like you very much.
M.M.

I did.

Journals also are used to record *information:*

February 26

George Washingt- on was The frst praza to slep in a ken sis bed.	George Washington was the first president to sleep in a king- sized bed.

The entries made in a dated journal present a daily record of writing development in a precise, easy-to-follow manner. As I look at a child's journal, I can note patterns and see characteristics which children have in common in their writing. The following pages are copied from Donald's journal:

Oct. 1	I like SKUL	I like school.
Oct. 4	I like Bkrwg AF the 20Fe Snte	I like Buck Rogers of the 25th century
Nov. 27	I like KRESMAS and hneka	I like Christmas and Hanukah
Nov. 29	I like BkRiGars	I like Buck Rogers
Jan. 10	I like a glob They ir good I like Them Becas I can Tal wat time it is	I like a globe. They are good I like them be- cause I can tel what time it is
	in athr cgis and my birthday is on April 28.	in other countries and my birthday is on April 28.

Charles Read's extensive study (1975) of invented spellings provides information which teachers can use to begin to understand spellings in their classrooms. Even though children are learning conventional spellings, certain patterns of misspellings still are present which appear to be based on the child's judgment of phonological relationships. Read (1980, p.145) notes that children use the letter *a* to represent the short *e*, the vowel of *bet* and *red*, more frequently than any other invented spelling. He also has found children represent the short *i* of *fish* with an *e*. Examples of these categorizations can be seen in Donald's writing: *20Fe* for *twenty-fifth*, *Kresmas* for *Christmas*, *tal* for *tell*. He begins to use the long vowels in words such as *glob* for *globe*. Like many other young children, Donald's spelling reflects his oral pronunciation. *Bkrwg* for *Buck Rogers* shows his use of *w* for *r* in his oral speech. *Hneka* is the way Donald says *Hanukah*. The words he writes most frequently are spelled conventionally: *I, like, and, is,* and *it*. When there are non-standard spellings, they do not remain over time so as to form a permanent bad habit. *Bkrwg* becomes *Bk RIGars* by November 29. Donald is a devoted fan of this TV show, and will eventually spell the name in a conventional form.

As Donald's spellings change, so does his use of lower and upper case letters. Many children use all capitals, *SKUL*, as they generate writing. Later they use capital letters to begin words or syllables, *BkRiGars*, and then they often place them at the beginning of each line. Some children are able to begin each sentence unit with a capital as well as names, such as Donald's example of *April*. Donald usually omitted punctuation as he wrote during this period of development.

Stories. Another form of writing activity in the first grade is the writing of stories. A shelf in the Writing Center has child-authored stories on it all year long. A book might be written as a child decides how to dress for Halloween, or to describe a play experience with a friend:

September 22

Me and My Friend	Me and My Friend
I like To Ply I ply with Heather I play aNd I ply We Jump and we jump We like to ply	I like to play. I play with Heather. I play and I play. We jump and we jump. We like to play.
The end	The end.

Initially many of these stories do not have a plot, but stop when the child reaches the end of a piece of paper, or the last page of a blank book. As children hear professional authors' stories, they often like to create new adventures for characters in these books. Some children will develop their own unique characters, such as the *orange monster* or the *talking egg*, and create imaginary situations and adventures for them. Many of these stories center around happenings or places in the student's daily lives. Scott's story begins:

Once upon a time a big frog happed into a dig buifding. The dig building was colled Way School. he went to the gime and klimd on the RoPe's it was scare to him he thut.	Once upon a time a big frog hopped into a big building. The big building was called Way School. He went to the gym and climbed on the ropes. It was scary to him he thought.

Scott's frog was traveling the same places that Scott did. His frog climbed the ropes that Scott was using in the gym. In this way, Scott was using his own feelings and observations as he created his frog story.

Summary

Children need a print-filled environment if writing is to flourish. They need the support of understanding teachers and others. Just as the child who is constantly corrected when speaking learns to quickly keep quiet, so the beginning writer stops if only allowed to show what control they have of an adult model. Clay (1975, p. 18) states:

> There will always be errors in word detail if the child is motivated to express his ideas, rather than merely stay within the confines of the vocabulary with which he is familiar and the skills he can control.

Beginning writers reflect their growing knowledge of an adult system as they make "errors in their writing." Bloom (1970, p.225) observes:

> Children's oral language is directly related to the adult model and is not an exotic language that is eventually supplanted by a different system.

This same observation may be made in children's writing. As children ask, "How do you spell it?," I often ask them, "How do *you* spell it?" As they try, they are usually amazed at the similarity of their spelling to mine. Children need to be reminded that they are only six or seven, and they will not grow to adult size during this year, so spelling, reading, math, etc. will not be "grown-up" this year either. Even if they are beginners, they are already on their way.

As I look at children writing in the first grade, I note patterns which different children exhibit at different times. This change is easily noted in a dated collection of writings kept on each child. The patterns are not predictable, however, as Marie Clay (1977, p.336) indicates:

> I doubt whether there is any fixed sequence of learning through which all children must pass in early writing.
>
> Eventually as each convention is mastered the children acquire a common fund of concepts but the point of entry and the path of progress may be different for any two children.

As children are allowed to write on topics they choose and have enough information to write about, their writing becomes more proficient. With the opportunity to take risks and reach out, they may begin to use writing in a creative way as does Jennifer, who understands how writing works, and uses it to communicate (Figure 2):

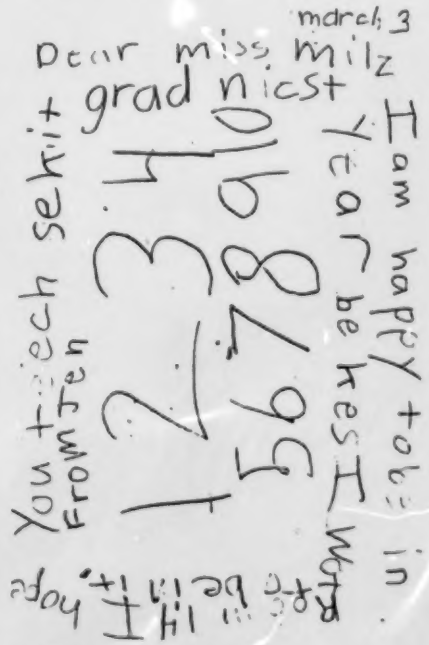

Figure 2: Message from Jennifer.

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tip

Learning to Spell by Spelling

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In the home, a child learns to speak by speaking. As he listens to parents and peers talk to him and to each other, the child notes patterns of sound that carry definite messages. Soon he begins to imitate and experiment with such patterns — roughly at first, but with increasing accuracy as time and practice move on. In school, the child is faced with the challenge of noting the visual patterns that carry meaning when he is introduced to reading and writing. As in learning to speak, the child faced with this new task of communication must internalize patterns if he is to become proficient. Formal spelling instruction does not begin immediately after the child enters school, yet the learner who is allowed to experiment and whose questions about words and spelling are answered will begin to evolve and then refine his own patterns of spelling much as he evolved and refined the patterns of spoken language. This evolution of spelling patterns is of great interest because it reveals both the sequence and the processes of natural learning. When observed closely it can provide important guides for teachers and curriculum developers.

Unlike language acquisition, which now has a vast body of literature detailing its processes, the acquisition of spelling has until recently received far too little attention (Hodges, 1979; Weigl, 1978). Close observations of the type carried on in the home are difficult and expensive to conduct in the usual elementary school. The work reported here is a modest beginning. It consists of in-class observations and anecdotal records made by a first-grade teacher (Margaret Reinhard, Fairburn Elementary School, Victoria, B.C., Canada) and this researcher over a period of three years. The children's written work forms a substantial part of the research record. It is supplemented by notes on their participation in spelling activities during the early part of the school year when much of the work is done orally with the teacher doing the writing on the blackboard.

The information obtained from observing individual children in their learning environment has not been subjected to statistical analysis; but, like the protocols of language acquisition studies, these cumulative bits of evidence are being validated by repeated observations year after year and by the findings of other researchers in the United States (Henderson, 1978) and Germany (Dehn, 1978, 1979). The converging evidence suggests that children progress through a number of stages when learning to spell.

41

Stages of Spelling Development and Their Parallels to Oral Language Development

The stages children traverse on learning to spell show striking similarities with those of learning to speak (See Table 1). In both cases, children vary in the length of time they spend at the various levels (See Figure 1). Overlap occurs between stages, and apparent regressions to lower levels of functioning are frequent at first. Learning is not a linear process but one of gradual synthesis and integration.

Just as the baby's babbling evidences definite intonation patterns and the intent to communicate, so *pretend writing* is the child's way of beginning his efforts to communicate in writing. The stage of pretend writing may begin at home and may be brief for some children. It is nonetheless significant. The child will often accompany his scribbling with a running monologue demonstrating that he has learned that written symbols are a means of communication. He is practicing this new type of communication as best he can. As such, this stage represents an important part of practice and should not be discouraged or rejected, just as babbling is not discouraged at home. Since the child is striving to communicate, he will watch for ways of upgrading his performance and the alert teacher will use every opportunity to model or demonstrate correct writing and spelling just as parents model fluent language in the home while the baby is still babbling.

Once the child begins to acquire a knowledge of letters, the selective process of language learning comes into play. Given the opportunity to select units that are meaningful to them, children begin with one-letter spelling. Though the teacher models spelling of complete words daily, first efforts at "helping to spell" are generally limited to a focus on the beginning consonant. Like the infant who provides his initial one-word sentence to communicate, beginning spellers supply just one significant component. Observations of German children suggest that they follow the same pattern (Dehn, 1979).

In both spelling and speaking the next phase continues the pattern of systematic omissions of certain parts of speech. In oral language the child at first confines his efforts to nouns, verbs, and a few adjectives, omitting function and inflections. In spelling, vowels are the missing parts. After initial consonants, final consonants appear next, medial consonants follow. A child may provide *b, s* and *l* when helping to spell bicycle. The teacher fills in the remaining letters and makes the necessary corrections, commenting that the *c* in bicycle certainly sounds like an *s*.

Vowels are last to become established. This was evident even during the early observations when the teacher was still following the standard instructional practice of making distinctions between long and short vowels. Despite her efforts, children were manifestly guessing when supplying vowels. In their early oral spelling and initial writing, children regularly omit vowels yielding *vte* (vest), *str* (sister) or *srrid* (surprised) (See also Table 2). The omission of vowels not only characterizes initial English spelling with its difficult range of vowel-sound correspondences, but appears in German examples as well: *frl* (Kyfel), *stn* (spielen) (Dehn, 1978, 1979). Like the omissions of function in the early language productions of the infant, so the omissions of vowels in spelling do not materially affect the communicative function of language. *My dr Tchrs* is readily recognized as *my dear Teacher* and the children will read these abbreviated versions as complete messages. It seems that the children intuitively select the most important features of language for reproduction, adding (like letters from home) context, their abbreviated spelling generally remains comprehensible just as the incomplete sentences of infants are comprehensible in their context.

As children progress, groupings of letters begin to emerge in their spelling. Simple rules of letter combinations are formulated and applied early. Blends like *sh, th, ch, ll,* and *ll* are acquired readily, as are morphologic markers like *ed, ing* and *s*. However, some of the rules the children evolve, like their early rules of grammar when learning to speak, do not necessarily conform to adult norms. They are interim structures setting the stage for further development.

The phonetic spelling children apply to a case in point. It demonstrates their acute hearing and careful analysis of words and their sounds. Words like *rain* and *trophy* may be spelled with a *ch* which closely resembles the sound of the initial blends. *Dwing* may have a *j* to signify its sound and *van* becomes *vin* signifying the child's perception of the sensation. In German, *Adler* is rendered as *Ada*, a spelling which represents the spoken sound much more closely than the correct one. *Kinder* is spelled *kiner*, again representing the actual spoken sound closely.

Phonetic spelling coupled with the acquisition of a number of sight words leads to the overgeneralization of rules (See Table 3). As beginning readers demonstrate the acquisition of rules by saying things like *comed* or *mice*, so the child learning to spell will generalize newly acquired spelling patterns to a broad range of examples before learning to discriminate more precisely. The transfer to spelling patterns from familiar to new words will result in *wook, hoo many, sumthing* and the like. Having learned about the *spaceship e* ending, some children will use *i* for *ai*:

analogy to a whole. The clients may become cognizant of addition to words having long vowel sounds, again demonstrating that the child is not working randomly but is applying more sophisticated learning and reasoning skills in refining his spelling rules. Certain children may overuse double consonants (bonnes) or add a silent e (cane) to indicate short vowel sounds (Gentry, 1978).

Thus, in training spelling development it becomes important to recognize the children's misspellings as indicators which signal advances rather than faulty functioning. Given the opportunity to continue their phonic and orthographic guessing games the children will progress beyond phonetic spelling and overgeneralizations. In class, as at home, language continues to be upgraded. Rules of spelling, like rules of grammar, evolve to fit adult standards more closely if children are given the chance to learn to spell by spelling when they generate, test, and refine their inner rules.

Table 1
Learning to Spell by Spelling

Stages of Development	
Speaking	Writing/Spelling
Babbling	Scribbling—Pictorial writing
One-word sentences	One-letter spelling
Two- and three-word sentences	Two- and three-word sentences
Self-programming of simple rules (not necessarily conforming to adult rules)	Self-programming of simple rules (not necessarily conforming to adult rules)
Overgeneralization of acquired rules	Overgeneralization of acquired rules and patterns (phonetic spelling, transfer of spelling patterns from known words)
Adoption of more precise speech	Adoption of more accurate spelling

Usual Sequence of Acquisition

Consonants (beginning, final, medial)
Blends (ch, sh, th, st, etc.) Morphologic markers (ed, ing, s, etc.)
Words (in frequent use (today, are, have, etc.)
Vowels

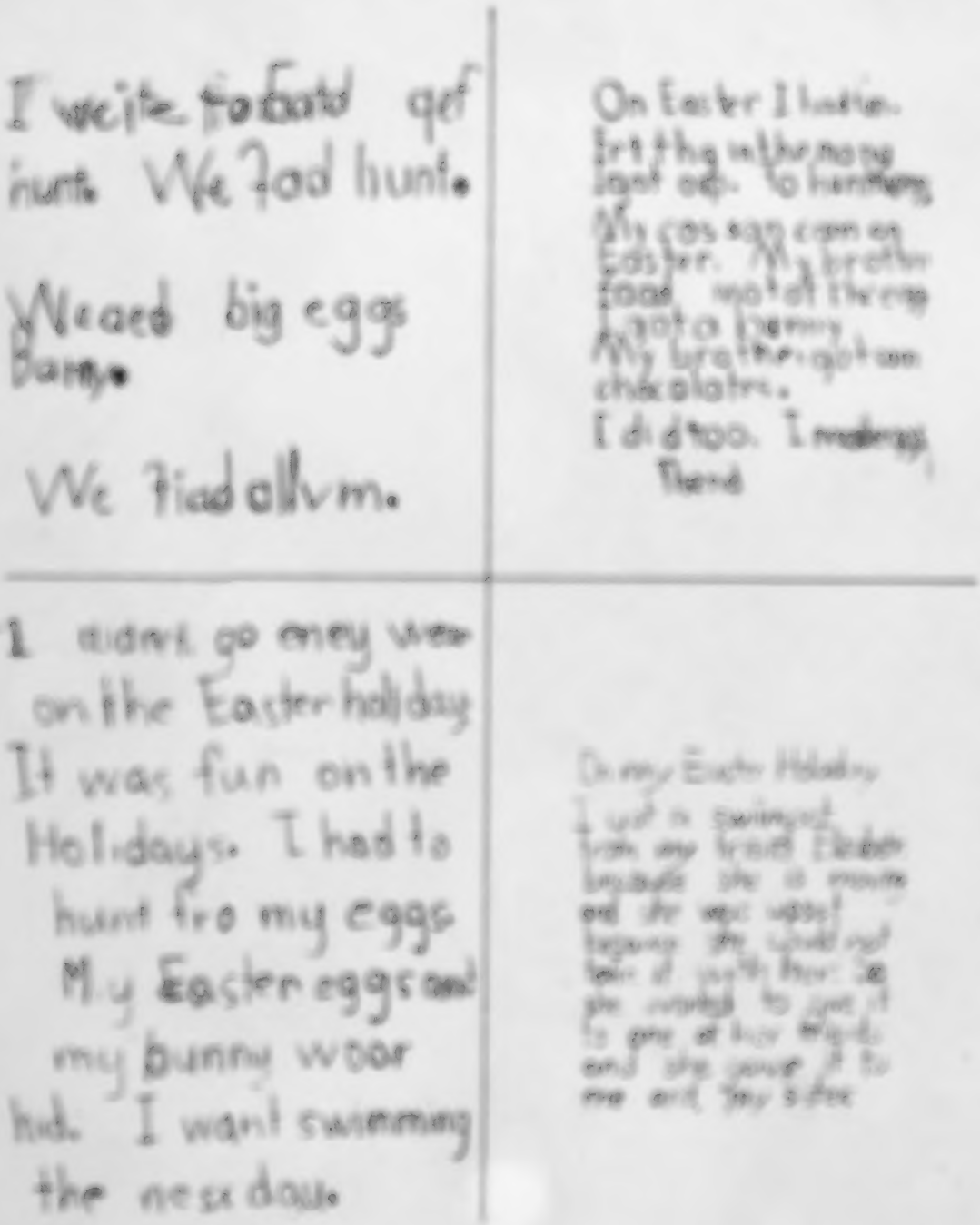
I write to Easter egg hunt. We had hunt.
We need big eggs Bunny.
We find all um.
On Easter I hunting. Fritting in the morning last egg. To hunters My cos egg com on Easter. My brother food not of the egg I got a bunny My brother got an chocolate.
I did too. I making Friend
I didnt go any where on the Easter holiday It was fun on the Holidays. I had to hunt for my eggs My Easter eggs and my bunny wear hid. I want swimming the next day.
On my Easter Holiday I was in swinging from my house Easter because she is mean and she was what happen she would not tell it with her so she wanted to give it to me at her house and she gave it to me and my sister

Figure 1. Four examples of creative writing demonstrating the broad range of composition and spelling

Table 2

Checking Vowels

fix	balls
on	wash
I	clown
hidden	holiday
Mum	Dairy Queen
tasty	basic
enemy	animals
enter	pirate
manage	manager
Toronto	Vancouver

Table 3

Phonetic Spelling
and
Overgeneralization of Known Patterns as Rules

eaten	eeeth
ate	eat
falls	fall
walks	walk
chairs	chairs
really	ally
other	other
excel	school
grow	girls
nowon	no one
walks	walked
to	more
throwup	threw up
growing	giving

Table 4

Vowel Cueing

frens	friends
frends	friends
marry	marry
fany	funny
krid	could
kold	could
enemls	animals
happyly	happily
fanny	funny
tomorro	tomorrow
parkir	parker
eat	ated
meal	meal

Processes at Work in Spelling

The processes underlying the natural development of spelling show the same close resemblance to language development as the progression through stages. Language used in meaningful settings marks the beginning for both. Neither evolves on the basis of being presented with disjointed elements of language or through being fed contrived language. Instead, the process is one of observing a flow of language and having the learner select those parts for attention for which he is ready. The focus throughout rests on meaning and communication; sounds and symbols are secondary. The learner internalizes patterns and structures rather than discrete elements. The rules generated for dealing with spoken or written language are based upon the internalization of these patterns at a subconscious level. Development is gradual, moving from gross processing to fine discrimination. It is not simply a matter of assembling the parts of spelling or grammar into a means of language. Instead, it constitutes the gradual development of an inner program or code that becomes the tool for receiving and creating language.

Whether learning to speak or learning to spell, the learner integrates far more than symbols, sounds, or words. In order to attach meaning to language, the infant uses all of his senses. The young school child learning to spell naturally uses a similar, integrative approach. He hears, sees, says, and writes the letters and words in conjunction with the daily practice of communicating by written language. S/he is under no constraint to perform or to be accurate, he will play with letters, sounds, spelling, writing and listening and literally obtain hours of extra practice and active involvement. In this way, learning to spell by spelling proceeds as readily and productively as learning to speak by speaking.

How to Foster Spelling Development

Parents know intuitively how to teach their children to speak by providing models of whole language and giving feedback. They also provide a climate that allows plenty of room for trial-and-error practice and the gradual shift from gross to fine processing of language. To simulate this climate and the successful teaching techniques of the parent-teacher, this writer, in partnership with Margaret Sandland, a highly experienced K-1 teacher, developed the Reading Experience Approach to teaching reading and writing (Forester, 1977; Forester and Mickelson, 1979). Under this approach children learn to read by reading and to spell by spelling on the basis of observ-

ing models of whole language in meaningful contexts, by practicing their initial gross skills in a safe environment, and by receiving feedback that acknowledges the content of their early incomplete work but expands its form. Like listening and speaking in the home, so reading and writing are evolved jointly in the classroom.

At the beginning of the year the teacher uses all the conventional methods and games to introduce children to letters, their forms, names, and sounds. Wall charts, pictures with accompanying letters to illustrate the sounds of beginning consonants, hopping mats with large letters for activity games, ABC books and rhymes, songs and jingles all form part of this early work. Two crucial aspects supplement these time-tested ways of teaching the rudiments of writing and spelling: 1) they are presented as games and children are neither asked to apply their knowledge nor reprimanded for failure to perform or participate — they pick the moment to begin just as they decided when to begin talking at home; 2) meaningful reading and writing is modelled daily by the teacher, by advanced peers, and any helpers the teacher can bring into the classroom. In other words, at the same time that the children are being introduced to the letters, they are also introduced to meaningful written communication. This process is similar to the parent's repetition of single words and careful enunciation done in conjunction with talking to the young baby to help him differentiate the parts of fluent speech.

From the first day of school — in both kindergarten and grade one — the teacher will write messages on the blackboard or captions under the children's pictures based on their dictation. As she writes each word she repeats it aloud and occasionally stops to spell one or to point to letters that the children have just been playing with. While reading stories, she holds the book so that the children can see the text. As appropriate, she may point to familiar letters or words once she has finished a story. Thus letters are not abstract or mysterious entities but obvious and important parts of communication.

As soon as some of the children have gained a degree of familiarity with a few letters, the teacher will invite them to help her spell. Children feel safe to try their initial skills because there is no demand for performance or for accuracy. Though the teacher encourages children to try, participation is voluntary and any reasonable facsimile will receive a positive comment. If *sh* is suggested instead of *s-p*, the teacher will comment on the similarities of the sound and appearance of these letters and then supply the correct letter herself. With practice, the children become increasingly accurate and soon begin to internalize some of the most frequent patterns of spelling. All of them see, hear, and copy messages daily from a very early point in the school year.

During this early stage, the teacher begins by writing down the letters the children suggest, leaving spaces to be filled in later. *Today* may elicit suggestions of *t* and *d*. The teacher writes them down and then adds the missing vowels, commenting that the word also needs an *o* and *ay*. The process has a number of significant advantages for the children's progress toward accurate spelling. The more advanced children practice their spelling and at the same time become peer models for the slower children who are eager to join in. Allowing the children the room to supply whatever they can lets the selective process of language acquisition function freely. As in the home, the child is thereby given the opportunity to select those units of language which are meaningful to him. Instead of having to follow a curriculum based on adult logic, the child determines the sequence of learning. By keeping the focus firmly on communication, the process of spelling is perceived as a necessary part of writing messages rather than as some difficult chore.

Keeping in mind the parallels between language learning and learning to spell, teachers will have to remind themselves that as the infant is content to convey a whole sentence by using one word, so the beginning speller is content to provide a single letter to signify a whole word. Both will move on from there if they are given the chance to practice freely. As long as the teacher continues to expand the child's brief messages without making demands for initial accuracy, the child will continue to add more and more detail to his spelling. The desire to communicate will remain strong and progress will come, even though slowly for some children.

Once spelling moves beyond the one and two-consonant stage for a number of children, the teacher begins to comment on such aspects as punctuation, capitals at the beginning of sentences, silent *e*'s at the end of words or familiar endings or spelling patterns. At this point some of the children graduate from copying sentences from the blackboard to composing their own daily diary entries with the occasional help of the teacher or a peer. Practice with pre-printed word cards such as the Sentence Maker of the Break-Through to Literacy series aids the children's efforts at learning to communicate in written language. Here, as in all other activities, the teacher accepts initial gross performance. If children put the words down from right to left or mistake *home* for *house* she makes little comment. Only if meaning suffers will the teacher make or ask for a correction.

Home-made dictionaries aid spelling development. As children are ready to make daily entries into their own diaries, the teacher provides a sheet of frequently needed sight words grouped together alphabetically. The children cut these out and paste them on sheets of a copybook in alphabetical order. As they need additional words, they make handwritten additions to their dictionary pages. Usually they have already turned to the correct page of their dictionary when they ask, "How do you spell . . .?" Encouraged to guess, they can usually provide at least some of the letters, though, as pointed out earlier, vowel guessing persists for quite a while.

The teacher uses every opportunity to model writing and spelling. If the entire class is writing about a field trip or similar experience, the teacher may write some of the words likely to be needed on the blackboard. When reading a child's diary or picture caption, she will provide a personalized phonics or spelling lesson based on that child's needs and level of performance. Once children progress to the stage of attempting to spell phonetically, the teacher will regularly demonstrate similarities of sound and spelling, but will also point to irregularities. If a child writes about a game and then spells *aim* to fit that pattern — *ame* — the teacher may produce a whole list of words that are spelled like *game* while pointing out that *aim* sounds the same but is spelled differently. On such occasions, she will always invite the children to help her think of examples.

At this stage it is particularly important that the teacher learn to listen and observe closely. As pointed out above, children have very keen hearing and their efforts to spell phonetically may fit the true sounds more closely than teachers — who are conditioned by years of spelling drills — are able to note. Offering *d* as the beginning sound of *that* or the median sound in *mother* may fit the child's pronunciation or hearing perfectly. Such efforts need to be reinforced and receive positive feedback, while also being corrected: "Yes, that sure sounds like a *d*, but in this case we need a *th*." As in miscue analysis the teacher learns to ask herself, "Why is this child giving me this kind of an answer?" If, for example, a child supplies *d* and *k* in response to the request to help with spelling "Tomorrow we go to the Dairy Queen," the child obviously picked the two most important words for attention and is making a fine guess about how to spell *Queen*. Sequence of words is not perceived as very important at first. Instead, like the child learning to speak, the beginning speller — or reader — will often select the most important meaning-bearing words for attention. From the standpoint of reading comprehension this is a highly significant and commendable approach. Like the child learning to speak, the beginning reader (or speller) seems to know intuitively which words are needed most to derive meaning. The functors and details will fill in later. The child, in either case, is gradually developing an inner program that will allow him to process and produce meaningful messages. He himself decides which parts of language are most important to communication and, if left free to proceed, his choices are highly productive.

The self-programming or establishment of inner patterns for spelling shows itself in the children's attempts at phonetic spelling and in overgeneralizations of rules. Much like the beginning speaker's *wented* or *mices*, the beginning speller's efforts will show signs of applying some rules. Though these attempts may produce mistakes like *ownly*, the *boys's* or *kwick*, these productions should be clearly recognized and reinforced by the teacher as the child's efforts at establishing and generalizing inner patterns or rules for spelling. As in learning to speak, these rules will approximate adult standards ever more closely if the child is free to practice and receives expanded feedback that acknowledges his message but corrects the form. If these corrections are made in a matter-of-fact way after the child's message has been acknowledged, the pleasure of writing remains unimpaired while the spelling evolves toward more accurate standards as painlessly and effectively as spoken language moves toward greater accuracy when parents use good modeling, expanded feedback, and safety for practice.

Benefits of Learning to Spell by Spelling

If the Reading Experience Approach to teaching reading and spelling seems overly simple, it nevertheless produces excellent results for the learners. By the end of the first school year, visitors to the classroom are struck by the children's proficiency in spelling and their prolific and creative writing. It appears that by fostering the process of self-programming, children move well beyond the level of the simple letter-sound correspondences inherent in much of traditional phonics instruction. They evolve and internalize orthographic patterns on the basis of semantic, syntactic, and phonologic analyses and they establish inner programs to guide their work. As a result, they retain a flexible approach to learning and are not disconcerted by the fact that English orthography is not a strictly phonetic code. They have responded to instruction that, as Hittleman (1978) puts it, focuses on the meaning of the message and on the spelling structures of written English.

Encouragir.g the child to move through the stages of spelling at his pace and evolving his gross skills to a point of ever finer discrimination lays as solid a foundation for future learning as giving the baby room to learn to speak at his own pace. Insisting on fine discrimination and the conscious application of teacher-supplied rules before the child has had the necessary practice with writing results in the empty verbalism Piaget and Vygotsky have warned about in connection with language acquisition and cognitive development. Spelling, like learning to speak, does not seem to be amenable to being speeded up. Meaningful practice over an extended period of time allows the child to set his own pace of learning and to establish his own program for spelling accurately.

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tip

Do We Really Need Those Oversized Pencils to Write With?

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For the past few years Virginia had tried to make sense out of the print in her environment and the world in general. She had enjoyed creating words and messages on unlined paper or on frost covered windows. She had composed messages on original birthday cards with paints or felt markers. Often she modeled the writing behavior of her parents while scribbling an important message on a piece of lined paper with a pen or pencil. In all this she was not unusual. She was doing what children do who grow up in a literate society.

Now she was going to school, and looked forward to learning to print and compose "like the big kids." What she found during the first few weeks at school was that the variety of writing instruments and materials that she used at home were not considered appropriate for her at school. Instead, Virginia and her fellow classmates were each given a large "primary pencil" without an eraser, and wide ruled paper. They were being treated as novices with no prior experience with writing.

This common practice raises several questions for researchers and teachers who are interested in the composing process of young children. Does the use of special materials in primary grades enhance or interfere with a child's composing? What is the research base for the use of such materials? Why are they widely used in schools today?

A historical investigation of these questions revealed: 1) There are very few sources when compared to other aspects of handwriting; 2) there is a disagreement among authors; and 3) there is a lack of empirical evidence to support many recommendations about the use of special writing implements and specifically ruled paper in primary classrooms.

Children of all ages used the same sized handwriting tools until the 1920s when the "primary pencil" and paper with wide ruling became available from school supply houses. At that time it was believed that these tools would help compensate for a young child's lack of muscular coordination and would be consistent with the development of large arm muscles.

Freeman (1936) made several references to handwriting materials in his many articles and books concerning this subject. He thought all children should learn to write at the blackboard and use a "fairly large pencil" with a smooth lead when writing at a desk. Taylor (1926), West (1927) and McKee (1934) agreed with Freeman that children should learn to write at the blackboard. When writing at a desk, McKee recommended a "beginners pencil" while West believed

students needed experience using difference instruments in anticipation of out-of-school writing demands.

Publishers and authors of systems of handwriting also gave conflicting advice. The A. N. Palmer Company suggested the use of pencils with a small or medium diameter. The Zaner-Bloser Company, which has paid a great deal of attention to handwriting tools, strongly recommended a large, soft leaded pencil. Foster and Houston (1927) emphasized the use of "an ordinary pencil of a medium grade of softness" while Cavanah and Myers (1937) and Hill and Savage, Billington (1938) and Miller (1924) were in agreement in recommending larger than ordinary pencils. Billington however, did warn that many "beginners" pencils were too large or heavy for many young children to handle comfortably. Since a fountain pen was always sharp and used by most adults, Cole (1938) preferred this instrument to a pencil which she considered informal and unsatisfactory.

Most authors agreed that the writing surface should be lined with initial spacing from one inch to an inch and a half. Gradually this distance would be reduced in the following grades. Most of these recommendations were not based on research. Several authors stressed the need for future study in this area which seems never to have been done. The most complete piece of research was conducted by Wiles (1940). In her study, Wiles used pencils with different diameters and paper ruled at different widths. Over 800 grade one pupils who had not received writing instruction were assigned to nine different groups using different lined paper and handwriting instruments over a period of a number of months. The handwriting was checked for fluency, alignment, form, spacing of letters, and size in relation to space and slant. Wiles concluded:

> . . . In light of these findings plus knowledge of principles of habit formation, there seems little justification for use by beginners of tools other than those already standardized and recommended for use throughout life. (p. 98)

In recent reports, Tawney (1967) found that children learned to write as well with ball point pens as with primary pencils. Krzesni (1971), after his study, recommended that a variety of instruments, e.g., pens, pencils, felt pens, and lined or unlined paper be available for children in the primary grades.

The review of the literature provided little empirical evidence for the exclusive use of primary pencils and wide ruled paper for all primary children in school or for any gradual change from one type of instrument to another or from one kind of lined paper to another. A child who has trouble controlling the writing instrument and becomes concerned with placing words between the lines, focuses on the mechanics of composing and not on the expression of thought and ideas. In such a situation the use of these materials could interfere with the child's composing. Graves (1978) described the teaching of handwriting, with an emphasis on mechanical correctness, out of the context of composition as the "main event" in many classroom writing programs. Children immersed in a literate environment that provides a variety of purposeful composing experiences learn the different aspects of the composing process, including handwriting, as they grow.

There are many children like Virginia who have used a variety of writing instruments when composing for different purposes in out-of-school settings. Informal interviews with parents, teachers and children reveal that in homes and preschools, there are all kinds of writing implements and paper available and used by children. Yet when they enter kindergarten, children who have already been exposed to number two pencils with erasers, ball point pens, stubby small pencils and grubby large ones, who have used narrow lined writing paper and unlined note paper, are relegated to using a specified kind of writing implement and paper. Teachers are often prohibited from using paper and pencils with their students which are not designated for the grade level that they teach.

We believe the kinds of materials used in writing is an insignificant aspect of any composition curriculum in schools if flexibility and opportunity for choice is available to teachers and children. If, however, there are stringent rules about the kind of paper and writing implements teachers and children must use, it is possible that such practices may interfere with the composing processes of young children. Sometimes comedians have a way of putting things professionals take too seriously into proper perspective. In his album "Why Is There Air?", Bill Cosby talks about the use of paper and pencils in first grade once learning to write is started:

> They give you this paper grade triple Z with wood still floating in it . . . You got to write around the hunks of wood. The lines are about eight feet apart. They don't want you to miss getting in between them lines, man . . . They give you these pencils as big as a horse's leg. And you rest them on your shoulder as you write.

We believe that a writing center with different writing instruments and kinds of paper can make

composing in the classroom a natural extension of previous writing experiences. To become proficient writers, children need an opportunity to write for different functions and audiences. In an informal setting teachers provide children with the opportunity and materials for rehearsal, composing and self-correction. While using a comfortable tool and not worrying about spacing or lines, the child focuses on composing and not the mechanics of writing.

The current research on composing in young children suggests that the purpose of the writing and the need to communicate to others provide the impetus for the development of composition. Research in this area does not support current restrictions on implements and paper.

A number of questions still deserve investigation: Does handwriting change with different functions and materials? Does a lack of a focus on formal handwriting instruction lead to poor writing? Has the use of typewriters in the classroom had an effect on handwriting? Until such questions have been addressed let's provide Virginia and her age-mates with materials of wide variety, encourage composing and expect development of handwriting to follow the functional use of written language.

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tip

Patterns of Development in Writing: A Case Study

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What can we learn from studying the writings of one child? Beyond learning about that particular child, we are surely observing some things that hold true for other children, though which things and for how many others we can only know from broader studies. But from observing one child we have some leads — some questions to ask and patterns to look for in studying other children.

While we cannot generalize from one case to many, conversely, we cannot presume to know an individual only in terms of generalizations drawn from groups. In schools we usually teach to groups, though children — like the rest of us — learn as individuals in the context of groups.

Paul, the child I observed, wrote his first messages using letters when he was four years old. One was a semi-linear arrangement of large, green letter forms intended to cheer me up. As a five-year-old, he wrote PAULS LATR TOO MAM DER MAM (Paul's letter to Mom. Dear Mom.). At nine years old, he wrote this letter:

Jan. 7, 1977

Dear Sirs,

Your metric information sounds like a very handy thing to have. So please send me one.

My address is: (address label affixed)

Your customer,

Paul Bissex

How does a child move from a global, pre-spelling concept of letter forms expressing a message to a concept of writing that includes representing words through an alphabetic spelling system, using and selecting appropriate compositional forms, being aware of an audience, and changing styles in accordance with that audience? In other words, how does a child learn to write?

Linguists tell us that children learn to speak not as mere imitators of adult language, but as experimenters — as little scientists constructing and revising their own rules until they can produce sentences like those of the mature speakers they hear. Through research on invented spelling we have just begun to observe how some children in fact learn to spell as distinct from our preconceptions and teaching methods. Charles Read, the first researcher of children's invented spelling, has argued that spelling ability grows from understanding a *system* and cannot be accounted for as the product of memorized lists of unpredictably spelled words. Spelling may have be-

come a matter of habit for mature writers—but *learning* to spell, like learning to speak, involves constructing and revising *rules*.

I am going to describe some patterns I saw in the development of one child's writings over five years. These patterns, which have also been observed in other areas of child development, are the processes of differentiation and decentration, the sometimes non-parallel growth of form and function, and an increasing realism.

"Differentiation," a term developmental psychologists borrowed from biology, is the subdividing of what was earlier a diffuse whole into parts with more specialized forms and functions. How does differentiation characterize the growth of a child's written language? Paul, as we saw, started writing using letter-like forms in a non-linear arrangement to convey a message; the letters did not represent words or sounds but rather an intent to communicate a feeling. His next step in writing reflected a concept of letters as representing speech sounds. This was evident in his "letter to Mom," but even earlier in the first message he spelled by himself: "RUDF." When five-year-old Paul wrote this, I was reading outside on the deck and he was in the house. After several unsuccessful attempts to talk with me, he took rubber letter stamps from his set, printed this message, and delivered it to me with feeling. Do you know what it says? "Are you deaf?!" Of course, I put down my book. He had broken through print with print.

Since he had not been taught the letter sounds, Paul constructed sound-letter relationships on the basis of letter names — a strategy that Read has described. Because letter names are syllables, Paul's first spelling system was semi-syllabic, as in the above note. Later he was able to make finer separations between consonant and vowel sounds. In spelling "telephone," for example, he put a vowel before the *l* rather than just using the letter *l* to stand for its name. He asked many questions about how to represent sounds that were not contained in letter names, such as "What letter makes the *sh* sound?"

A month after printing "RUDF," Paul typed "EFUKANOPNKAZIWILGEVUAKANOPENR." You are probably having as much difficulty as I did deciphering it. Paul read it for me: "If you can open cans, I will give you a can opener." I mentioned to him that most people, when they write, leave a space between words. A few minutes later he typed "EFU WAUTH KLOZ IWEL GEVUA WAUTHENMATHEN" (If you wash clothes, I will give you a washing machine). Soon he was separating all his words. When he wrote by hand, which he did more often than typing, he segmented with dots rather than spaces. For a time he carried this strategy so far that he segmented some affixes as well: "PAUL.IS.GOWING .TO.RUN.A.RAWND.AND.JUMP. AND.EXRSIZ." He titled this "RE.PORT.KARD.ON.SPORTS." Dots were Paul's reinvention of a device used in ancient manuscripts; in fact in the very earliest manuscripts words were not separated at all, so Paul was recapitulating a bit of the history of writing.

Paul wrote his "report card on sports" seven months after he had started invented spellings. After he wrote it, he asked repeatedly if it was all correct. He had not suddenly become concerned with correctness, but his sense of the *unit* of correctness had changed from letters to words. His questions about spelling had already shifted from asking how to represent *sounds* to asking how to spell *words*. A question like "What letter makes the *ah* sound?" implies just as correct an answer as the question "How do you spell *again*?"

In the evolution of his spelling of the word *directions*, we can see Paul's ability to make finer and more complex distinctions:

5:7 DRAKTHENS
5:8 DRAKSHINS
7:5 DIRECKSHONS
7:5 DIREKSHONS
8:1 DIRECTIONS? (unsure whether it was -TION or -TOIN)
8:4 DIRECTIONS

Clearly *he* regarded his spellings as perfectible rather than as fixed word patterns to be repeated from memory.

Paul wrote a great deal before first grade—and even before he was able to read much. His use of invented spellings enabled him to write freely from the start in what may seem a surprising variety of compositional forms: signs, labels and captions; stories; little books; directions; lists or catalogues; newspapers; notes, letters and greeting cards; statements; and school-type exercises. He wrote spontaneously in more different forms than he used in school assignments. He continued to write in many of these forms during the five years of this study, though sometimes with dramatic changes in their functions (see Table 1).

At the very beginning of writing, he wrote a series of what I would call labels, each on a separate piece of paper, such as "PAULS TALAFONBOOTH" (Paul's telephone booth), "PAULS GAMP ROP" (Paul's jump rope) and "PAULS DP" (Paul's dump). They were labels in form but not in function since they had no concrete referents. Slightly later he typed

"PAULZCIDERMUSHEN" (Paul's cider machine) on a sheet of paper with a drawing of a machine on it, which was more functionally a label. Later, he attached signs to objects around the house; a kitchen cupboard was labeled "PAULZ RABR SAF RABRZ KANT GT EN" (Paul's robber safe. Robber's can't get in). He also did a lot of writing and drawing on wooden blocks, making permanent and real their transformations from mere pieces of wood into "factories," "radios" and so forth. Taking on a more conventional and realistic function, a sign Paul posted on his bedroom door read "DO.NAT.KM.IN.ANE.MOR.JST.LETL.KES." (Do not come in any more. Just little kids). Later signs and labels he wrote were increasingly conventional in function, as signs for sales and performances he was putting on.

Another example of form preceding function was Paul's contentless "letter to Mom" as contrasted with the letter he wrote four years later requesting metric information described earlier in this article. This same pattern of form preceding function has been observed in language development — for example, by Piaget in young children's use of "because" before they have a sense of causality.

One of Paul's enduring compositional forms was the newspaper. In tracing the development of his newspapers we can see patterns of increasing differentiation and realism. At 5:7 Paul produced his version of our local paper, the *Times Argus:* "TIMS. R.GIS. THAR. WL. B. SHAWRS. IN. THE. AFTR. NUN." (There will be showers in the afternoon). His newspaper a year later contained funnies, an extended weather forecast, illustrated advertisements and a sports item—all fanciful. This paper was written on a large sheet of cardboard with a series of irregularly drawn boxes, each containing one feature. In Paul's "Daily Blab" (8:4) funnies again came first, followed by a notice, a puzzle, a request column and an advice column. Verbal humor had been added to pictorial physical violence in his funnies, and for the first time there was news about an actual event. "The Daily Round Up" (9:1) was more realistic in format with narrow typed columns, headlines, and a photograph. The notices were again of real events. Paul's humor was more sophisticated and verbal, with a "Pistol Paul" parody recalling *Mad* magazine, which he has adored since he was seven years old. Paul moved from a very partial and global sense of a newspaper to producing much more differentiated, precisely imitated and realistic versions.

Another enduring form of writing was the story. One of Paul's very early compositions was a little story with the conventional "once upon a time" beginning, in which a single character performs a single action—the barest bones of a story. It was sprawled in large blue letters over five sheets of paper: "Once upon a time there was a bear and that bear went away and he never came back again" (5:1). A year later, as a first grader, Paul wrote daily "stories" beneath a drawing he had made. At about six and a half, he wrote in school this story involving two characters, a conflict, and a sequence of actions: "This is the police chasing me and I am going to go up a ramp and I am going to land in a hole and the hole is my hideout."

The next year, his characters had motivations and feelings that accounted for the more extended and complicated chain of events. A hero with a goal meets an obstacle which he overcomes. "Once upon a time there was a little rabbit who had no home. So he looked for one. In the distance he could see a light. He went toward it. It was a house. At last he had a home! He went in. This is what it looked like (drawing of the interior). Then a man came out of a door and took the

Table 1
Forms of Writing

	Ages				
Persistent forms	5	6	7	8	9
signs, labels, captions	X	X	X	X	X
stories	X	X	X	X	X
little books	X	X	X	X	X
directions	X	X	X	X	X
lists or catalogues	X	X	X	X	X
newspapers	X	X	X	X	X
notes, letters, greeting cards	X	X	X	X	X
Discontinued forms					
"statements"	X				
school-type exercises	X	X	X		
riddles		X	continued orally		
Later forms					
rhymes		X	X	X	X
charts, organizers and planners			X	X	X
diary				X	X
quizzes (information in Q & A form)				X	X
informational & observational notebook				X	X
codes					X

rabbit out. The rabbit came back to the house. This time the man felt sorry for the rabbit and let the rabbit in and the rabbit and the man lived happily ever after. The end." The rabbit story is a transition from simple, childish narratives to an elaborated piece of youthful literature, "A Magic Carpet or Two," (8:4). The story begins like this:

> Once I was playing with two of my best friends Kenny and Matthew. We were in the attic of Kenny's garage sorting out old junk and stuff. Then Kenny's sister Robin came in the garage and was going to come up. There was a hole directly above, about 1 foot from the first step. There was a lot of cloth in the attic of the garage — some pieces big, some small. We used the big pieces to keep people from coming up. We dropped the cloth down the hole. It was going to hit Robin but then it started flying. I grabbed it. I got on it and sat Indian style. Then it flew down the steps and out of the garage. And then it started going what seemed like 100 miles per hour, and before I knew it I was in some strange desert. Then I saw a man and when he saw me he said, "Put him down, put him down, magic carpet, to the ground." The carpet stopped flying and landed. I said, "Who are you?" "I am the owner of the carpet you are sitting on," was what he said. I didn't know what to say. Then he said, "I could teach you the magic words. Would you like that?" "Yes I would." He taught me all the magic words for up and down. Then I got on, waved goodbye, and said, "Carpet rise, carpet rise, fly way up into the skies," and the carpet started flying. I suppose you want to know how you steer a magic carpet. Well, if you want to go right, you lift up the front left corner, and the opposite for going left. It was almost supper time so I flew home, hid my magic carpet in the storage, and then I went in to eat my supper.

In chapter 2 the carpet delights and amazes Paul's third grade classmates at school, but in chapter 3 it starts tearing around the classroom and wrecks the school building.

"A Magic Carpet or Two" presents a cast of (relatively) thousands, moving across four settings. Throughout the story the everyday world of school routines, friends and home, with its order and predictability, is contrasted with the magical world of the carpet, which breaks down boundaries and structures and expectations. While there is a dream-like intermingling of the strange with the familiar, Paul's sense of reality is mature; he can distinguish the supernatural from the ordinary. Instead of the straight narration of earlier stories, he uses a combination of different techniques: dramatization, dialogue and narrative. As a story teller Paul is now aware of his audience — sometimes explicitly, as when he remarks, "I suppose you want to know how you steer a magic carpet."

Other forms besides newspapers and stories, which might be traced through several years of Paul's writings, show similar patterns of development: increasingly differentiated structures and styles, content drawn from an ever wider world in which a more conventional sense of reality prevails, and greater awareness of an audience. Development appears to proceed from global to increasingly differentiated functions and awarenesses.

Paul's writing development was expressed not only in progressions within forms, but in the disappearance of some early compositional forms and the later addition of other kinds of forms (see Table 1). I have labeled as "statements" certain writings that seem unclassifiable by adult categories—writings such as "Birds can fly and birds can go places" or "If you can open cans, I will give you a can opener." Conventional categories may not apply to the writings of young children, who do not see the world as adults see it, and who do not make adult distinctions. Understanding the purposes of a child's writing means understanding his changing view of himself and the world.

As a five-year-old Paul was still absorbed in naming — in knowing the world by naming its parts; in his signs and labels and captions, he extended naming through writing. In the next year or two, as his reasoning developed, and his need to know and control the world around him became expressed through categorizing, this form of knowing, too, was reflected in his charts, schedules and other organizational writings. His interest in the larger world around him was expressed through informational writings (as well as readings, such as *The Curious Book* and *The Guinness Book of World Records*).

Decentration is Piaget's term for this movement outward from the young child's egocentric view of the world. Decentration involves being able to take another person's point of view, which increases about age seven. In Paul's early writings there was no clear distinction between writer and audience in the sense of someone who does not automatically share all the writer's unexpressed knowledge. When he wrote "A Magic Carpet or Two" as an eight-year-old, he could stand outside his writing — outside his understanding of what he had written — and give explanations to a reader.

Decentration goes hand in hand with differentiation. Not only did Paul come to differentiate writer and audience, but various kinds of audiences: peers, teachers, parents, unknown clerks (in business letters) and self (in diaries). He was polite and businesslike in business letters, could sound quite bookish in his school writings, and teasing and humorous with parents and friends. The widening world of his audience and of his interests — the expansiveness of decentration — was reflected in his writings.

When he was five-and-a-half years old, Paul wrote and posted this sign over his workbench: "DO NOT DISTRB CNYS AT WRK." The "genius at work" is our human capacity for language. "Do not disturb" is a caution to observe how it works, for the logic by which we teach is not always the logic by which children learn.

tip

Why Should I Write? Environmental Influences on Children's Views of Writing

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Halliday (1973) describes the reasons for learning written language as similar to the reasons for learning to speak.

> The impetus for reading and writing is a functional one, just as was the impetus for learning to speak and listen in the first place. We learn to speak because we want to do things that we cannot do otherwise; and we learn to read and write for the same reason. (p. 10)

Thus, we learn to use written language because it enlarges our capacity to shape our experiences into meaning, to represent meaning to ourselves and others and to represent ourselves to others in our environment.

Nowhere is this motivation more evident than in children who show early and self-initiated interest in writing and reading—and that does seem to be the order (Durkin, 1966; Read, 1970; Hall, Moretz and Nason, 1976). Studies of preschoolers who evidence this interest indicate that they begin with attempts to represent meaning using invented spelling. At first, they seem more concerned with self-expression and the pleasure of production than with the ability of a reader to comprehend their meaning (Read, 1970). As they become concerned with communicating their message to others, they gradually attempt to learn some of the conventions of arrangement and space that allow others to comprehend their message (Clay, 1975; Hall et al., 1976). It appears that the child first discovers the purpose of written language in an attempt to represent meaning to himself and others and then develops a need to learn how the culture uses written language.

The extent of the child's awareness of the functions of written language depends upon the information that the child receives from the social environment. Descriptions of the environments in which early writers develop reflect features that are similar. Durkin (1966), Read (1970), and Hall et al. (1976), found that in almost all cases, parents did not attempt to instruct directly, but they did respond to their children's questions concerning writing and showed interest and pleasure in their productions. Hall et al. found that almost all the early writers in their sample frequently observed parents or siblings engage in composing. In these environments, it seems reasonable to assume that children will learn to value composing as a mode of representing meaning, will attempt it themselves and will recognize a need to learn its conventions, just as the infant in Halliday's (1975) case study developed most of the functions of lan-

prior to acquiring the basic and grammar of adult language.

While almost every baby capable of developing oral language receives sufficient information from observation and interaction with others to develop a model of the uses of oral language in his subculture, some children have little or no access to information about the uses of written language in their social environment. Others may confine their engagements in written language to reading, and even that may be limited. A higher premium is placed on television, the telephone and face to face communication. The child may have little or no opportunity to observe others either reading or writing or to explore the purposes of written language by obtaining responses to preliminary drawings and scribbles. Significant figures value other modes of communication more, and the child internalizes the same value.

For children from this kind of social environment, the first sustained exposure to written language may occur in school. Clay (1977) points out that especially for these children it is important that primary emphasis be placed on the meaningful uses of written language to represent their own ideas. Mastery of the subskills such as formation of letters, and word and letter order will occur gradually as the child recognizes the need for these conventions. Data from Graves' (1979) longitudinal study of the development of writing ability from first to second, and third to fourth grade, also supports this conclusion. In a related study Calkins (1979) found third graders who had learned punctuation as they needed it for their composing could define or explain an average of 3.4 or more while students who had been instructed directly through drills and exercises could only define or explain 1.81 punctuation marks. This finding suggests that even when the instructional goal is mastery of the "basic skills," the student will be less successful than the one who finds a purpose for learning them.

When the child's early academic experiences direct the child's attention to the component skills rather than to the meaningful uses of written language, mastery of the conventions becomes an end in itself rather than a tool to facilitate communication of meaning to an audience. The sequence of instruction is analogous to requiring the baby to first learn the basic and grammar of adult language before finding a purpose for their use. Moreover, when the child is asked to compose, attention is again directed to the conventions as the child is cautioned to write neatly and to spell and punctuate correctly. The standards of evaluation are clear, and the child gradually internalizes a view of composing as another exercise in which to demonstrate mastery of the conventions. This view, however, the child must make up for himself. If the kind of academic environment is the only source of information concerning the purposes of composing, it seems reasonable to assume that composing will remain an alien, school-sponsored activity with little purpose other than to show compliance with an external demand.

Proficiency in Writing

The relationship of certain non-academic and academic experiences to differences in children's views of composing and level of proficiency in composing emerged as a major finding in a case study of eight students from fourth and seventh grade (Bridwell, 1980). The subjects came from two school districts and had been selected by their teachers and an administrator as the most proficient readers and writers in their grades. During two sessions, each student was videotaped from times while composing silently and discussing their behaviors and rapid voice while composing aloud. Similar tapes were made while the students read. Transcripts of the composing episodes were independently rated by two experienced ETS readers and by the investigator. Each student was also observed in classes a minimum of thirty hours, and parents and teachers were interviewed to obtain a history of each student.

Analysis of all the data revealed that even allowing for developmental differences some fourth and seventh graders were more proficient than others. They consistently received higher ratings on their texts, and they shared a similar range of focal concerns while composing as indicated by their patterns of physical activities, length and location of pauses and their oral explanations. While the more proficient writers approached composing with the intention of representing their meaning to an audience, the less proficient writers seemed to approach it with the intention of writing a text, some-thing like a paper about something—anything. The more proficient writers tended to be more reflective at each stage of the process, pausing to deliberate over a wider range of alternatives related to their topic, their organizational and linguistic choices, and their audience, and evaluating their texts according to these criteria. It should be noted that they tended to produce more written in the episodes compared to texts written in more liberal contexts.

The less proficient writers tended to write their first idea and write until they were forced to pause in order to search for, as opposed to select, additional ideas, words and/or to check or correct surface features of their language. Recognition that their texts were

intended to be real and concern with the relation of the two ideas to reveal meaning seemed to occur after the text was completed—if at all. They avoided voluntary evaluation of their texts, when pressed, they too referred to adherence to conventions, length or appearance—external standards—reflecting their view of composing as an externally imposed task.

To make these generalizations more concrete, the behaviors of two seventh graders will be summarized. Both students had been told a week in advance that they would be asked to write about a memory that was important to them. They could write in any mode and could take as much time as necessary. Kathy will write a 328 word text that will receive a high rating of 6. James will write a 76 word text that will receive a low rating of 1.

As Kathy's session begins she indicates that she has thought about several topics but still has not selected one. She sits thinking for almost four minutes, then smiles and begins to write. She writes her first paragraph rapidly, shifts position and begins the next one, but now her pace is slower. At the end of three successive sentences, she pauses two to three seconds to reread the last sentence of her first paragraph. After her third rereading, she plunges and begins to write rapidly without pauses of more than two seconds to the end of the eleven-sentence paragraph. She shifts again, sits looking ahead for thirteen seconds, rereads the end of her previous paragraph and begins again. And so the pattern goes with the exceptions of a pause and paragraph to look speculatively at me, a mid-sentence pause prior to writing the word *scarves*, and another to scratch out the initial letters of a two sentence. When she is finished, she rereads the troublesome first paragraph and rapidly erases the text because, in her words, "I know what I wrote." She cannot help but contrast this self-assured statement with Clay's (1977) anecdote of the four-year-old who finished scribbling and asked, "What did I write?"

Kathy judged her text to be inferior to texts that she had written in other settings but decided that in this context, a videotaped episode, it was satisfactory. She commented that it was clear and with one exception the style was acceptable. The exception was the sentence at the end of the first paragraph, "My parents went out to dinner and to see a play." The phrases were not parallel, and she knew it. Even as she recalled her next segment of thought, she tried to revise it until with a shrug she gave up. Deciding that she did not have time to reformulate, she concluded her self with expressing dissatisfaction with the phrase.

Kathy's ongoing evaluation of her linguistic choices was also evident in her explanation of the pause before writing sentence. She was searching for a more precise word than her initial choices of things and birds. Her explanation of other behaviors, described here, indicated the range of considerations that informed her composing. Of her long pre-writing pause, she said:

> I knew what I would write about, but I had to get organized . . . .
> I can't start until I know where I'm going. Sometimes it changes on the way, but I'll still like it.

As the location of her pauses and her activities suggested, she tended to plan major segments, then check the fit and begin to write again. Her search out, for example, had resulted from her decision to eliminate a segment because in her words, "You didn't need to know that." Her consideration of her audience's response was also apparent in her explanation of her speculative look at me during another pause. She had written a description of her puppy and was about to conclude with the generalization that he was "very cute." She said, "I was wondering if you would think he was cute too."

Now consider James' response to the same stimulus. James had forgotten about the assignment. After being reminded, he stares straight ahead for 45 seconds, then says, "I'll write about my trip to Florida." He writes the first two sentences without pause. Then he looks away for ten seconds and returns to the first sentence to correct a spelling. He begins the next sentence with *I* but erases it and substitutes *Being that*. He later explained these activities.

> I didn't know what else to write after that . . . had to think . . . I looked over everything to check spelling. Things looked funny so I changed it . . . I was going to write *since* but I wasn't sure how to spell it. I changed to *Being that*.

As he writes the balance of his 76 word text, he often pauses mid-sentence when he stops to correct a word, insert punctuation or search for a phrase to complete his sentence. He does not reread while composing but regularly scans previous lines for errors.

James' decision to substitute the more awkward *Being that* because he was uncertain of a spelling reflected his most frequently expressed final concern while composing. During one discussion, I asked him if he found composing difficult. "Oh no, just the spelling of some words," he said. His other major concern was neatness, and in this episode he showed that he valued it more than adequate communication of his

meaning to an audience. James reread his text for the first time as I read it. He saw that he had omitted an important segment necessary for understanding the point of his story about smuggling his own supply of water to Florida.

J: Guess I left out the part about Florida's water.

K.D: What about it?

J: It stinks!

K.D: What do you mean?

J: I went there before. It stinks. I needed to take my own water.

K.D: That seems important to the story. Do you want to add it?

J: Guess not. It would mess up everything. I'd have to erase all that.

James' priorities are clear: keep the paper neat even if meaning must be sacrificed.

The composing behaviors of Kathy and James have been described in some detail because they exemplify the patterns of the more and the less proficient writers in the study. Of course, there were intragroup variations in level of proficiency and interindividual variations in response to different stimuli that cannot be described here. In general, however, the more proficient writers shared one view of the purpose of composing which was reflected in their composing behaviors and the quality of their texts, while the less proficient writers shared another view that was reflected in their behaviors and texts.

Different Views of Composing

These two groups also revealed telling differences in their views of themselves as writers and their views of the place of composing in their lives. All of the more proficient writers volunteered in their self descriptions that they were "good writers" as well as "good readers." The less proficient writers refused to use the term "good writer" when describing their views of themselves, even when asked directly, but indicated they thought that their teachers believed that they were. Interestingly all of the less proficient writers aspired to careers that seemed to require little writing ability, e.g. dancer, artist, baseball player. With one exception, the more proficient writers foresaw themselves in careers that would require writing ability, e.g. lawyer, author, reporter, even though each of these students also either played an instrument, danced or liked to paint. One student wanted to be a computer engineer, but thought that she would continue to write poems because she enjoyed it.

That student's comment points to another difference concerning the current place of composing in their lives. All of the more proficient writers engaged in self-sponsored writing as well as school-sponsored writing. One fourth grader was revising what he called a "space detective novel" for submission to a regional Young Author's Conference. A seventh grader had a large file of letters from public officials including one from an assistant to the foreign minister of another country in response to his letters concerning public issues. He also had a collection of stories concerning a planet that he had created two years before and continued to develop. All of these writers were able to produce samples of self-sponsored writing including some saved from previous years, another indicator of the value that they placed on their work.

In contrast, the less proficient writers apparently engaged in no self-sponsored writing. Although one fourth grader said he liked to write riddles, he actually meant that he liked to copy them from books. None could produce any samples and they even seemed unable to comply with the request to save their school-sponsored compositions. To quote James' explanation, "They just seem to drift away."

The more proficient writers evidenced more self-knowledge about their composing habits. The tendency to reflect over a wide range of concerns that marked their composing behaviors also seemed to mark their thinking concerning the composing experience itself. Listen to Patti and Michael, both fourth graders, generalize about their writing:

P: I don't write poems anymore. I decided I'm not good at it. I'm better at fiction. My stories always have magic in them . . . .

M: (Explaining why he had paused to mentally revise a sentence in an episode) My viola teacher told me to be efficient—not to waste my energy on extra movements. When I write, I try to do that too—pack as much as I can into every sentence.

Not only were they cognizant of their preferences and strategies, but they were acutely attuned to the degree of engagement required by different contexts for composing. This was evident in Kathy's evaluation of her text as acceptable in view of the constraints of the episode and her decision not to invest more time in the revision of one sentence. In another episode, however, the stimulus led her to work on a poem that she had been attempting to complete for two years. She wrote three drafts that were marked by

major reformulations of ideas, and at the end of the episode she still viewed the poem as subject to further revision.

Fred, the author of the letters and collection of stories, made some careful distinctions about school sponsored writing when asked how he responded to school assignments.

> F: Well it depends. An essay exam in social studies? Well, I know what she'll probably ask, and I've studied. So I just do it—there's no way to avoid it. I write it fast, then go back and fix up stuff—maybe recopy—she likes margins on both sides. And if it's a big report, it depends on the topic. Like I decided to write mine on the Union Pacific. I liked that. Most of the stuff wasn't new to me, but I checked some more books. Then I wrote up twenty pages. It took me days and days. I worked hard. Usually I keep reworking it until I'm sure it's right.
>
> JCB: What does "right" mean?
>
> F: That the ideas are in order. I change sections around—history, territories and the sentences . . . .
>
> JCB: Is that your usual way of writing?
>
> F: Not always. If I don't want to write about a topic, but I have to? Then I just look up a couple articles in encyclopedias and copy out some sentences. I move the sentences around and change some words. I don't really listen to the information underneath—know what I mean? You know that saying, "In one eye and out the other?"

Fred's distinctions mirrored the ability of all the more proficient writers to gauge the context and control their level of response. Similar kinds of statements from others revealed that they had learned to engage in composing on a full scale, or range of commitment from what Emig (1971) calls the detached reportorial edge of the extensive mode to the fully involved reflexive mode.

On the other hand, the less proficient writers tended to respond to composing in one key. They revealed little preference for certain contexts or topics or modes. As James' comment about his difficulty with spelling in composing suggests, their generalizations about composing usually concerned their strategies for avoiding error. Contrast Barbara's definition of "right" with Fred's definition.

> B: Every couple of lines, I go back and check to be sure that everything is right.
>
> JCB: What does "right" mean?
>
> B: That nothing is wrong—spelling, capitals, periods.

How had these students come to construe the value and purpose of composing in such different ways? The answer seemed to lie in their nonacademic and academic experiences. Interviews with their parents in their homes and the teachers, as well as observations of the students in their classes revealed some striking differences in these students' experiences with written language.

Nonacademic Environments

Comparison of the students' home and social environments pointed to two important features shared by the more proficient writers and absent from the backgrounds of the less proficient writers. The first was the presence of a role model who regularly engaged in writing for personel or professional reasons and conveyed through his or her activity the value of composing to the student. The second was the availability of audiences who evidenced interest and responded to the child's productions.

The role models were not always parents. For one seventh grader, whose parents wrote letters regularly to their family, the most important model seemed to be a grandfather, a published author in his country. The child and her parents had lived with him before emigrating to this country when she was seven. She continued to correspond with him and send him stories and poems. For another student, the first models had been his older sisters. He remembered pretending to write as he watched his sisters do their homework. His mother, a widow who had completed third grade in her native country, placed a premium on academic achievement. She worked in a school cafeteria, and her expressed goal was to see that each of her children completed college or some advanced training. In addition to these initial role models, this student had access to the father of a friend who wrote as part of his academic career and who also, according to a school counselor, served as a surrogate father for this boy.

Perhaps the most unusual role models proved to be college boys in a dormitory where Kathy's parents worked as resident counselors while in graduate school. Kathy remembered that as a preschooler she sat on the boys' laps and pretended to read as they studied, and pretended to write as she watched her parents and the boys write their papers. Kathy's current role models were her parents who continued to publish for professional reasons and also seemed to be

the most directive in their involvement with their children, guiding them to certain types of reading to make sure that they learned both their European and African heritage, and reading their school sponsored compositions.

The less proficient writers, however, had no such role models. As far as I could determine, no one in their environments wrote on a regular basis. One parent said that she occasionally wrote notes to her family. Two other parents flatly said that they had no need to write and instead relied on face-to-face communication or the telephone, just as they tended to rely on the television for their major source of information about news.

The more proficient writers also found audiences for their writing in their nonacademic environments. Parents, other family members or friends served as readers. Michael depended on his mother and to a lesser extent on his father as audiences and typists for his texts. Fred's mother, the widowed cafeteria worker, said somewhat impatiently of her son's school-sponsored writing:

> He writes it over and over. He worries too much. He upsets the whole house. We have to listen to it again and again.

Despite her impatience, her description revealed that she and the family did serve as an audience, that Fred had learned to expect them to be audiences and that Fred's description of his writing habits, quoted earlier, was fairly accurate.

Some parents, especially those of the seventh graders, tended to serve mainly as audiences for school-sponsored writing. Fred had found his friend and his friend's father as well as other audiences for his self-sponsored writing. His mother expressed her concern over her son's correspondence with public officials and cited it as evidence that sometimes "he seems a little crazy." She revealed no knowledge of his stories concerning his planet, nor, it should be added, did she learn anything from me about this subject. The two fourth graders still looked to their parents as audiences for their writing. Michael wrote a poem about Hanukah during one episode, judged it as good and decided to give it to his mother as a Hanukah present. Patti, a prolific writer, summarized her perceptions of her family's role in her composing.

> Look! I'm the author. My mother is the editor. She fixes it up and types it—when I let her—and my father and sometimes my brother are the readers.

Like Patti, all of these students had learned to expect that someone in their nonacademic environment would respond to their texts and help them when necessary. Moreover, their parents talked more knowledgeably about their children's writing experiences, although the level of knowledge varied from that displayed by Fred's mother to Kathy's parents who seemed to recall every stage of her academic and nonacademic experiences in composing. Some were able to recognize themes and devices in texts from the episodes as characteristic features of other texts that the child had written. Some even produced early samples that they had saved.

The parents of the less proficient writers revealed little knowledge about their children's writing experience. Most of their children's writing was done in school; and they assumed that since their children were doing well in school, they must be good writers. All of these parents were interested in their children's academic progress and voiced hopes for their success. Teachers remarked that these parents were unusual in the school district because they attended parent conferences. However, their comments indicated that written language was simply not important to them, and they seemed to have conveyed this attitude to their children who engaged in little writing, whether school-sponsored or self-sponsored in their homes.

The Academic Environment

With one apparent exception, the more proficient writers came from academic environments that were particularly conducive to learning the values and purposes of composing. All but one had been enrolled in one school district since kindergarten. The one exception was Liza, who wanted to be a computer engineer, had lived with her grandfather in her native country and had attended private schools until fifth grade. She was one of two representatives from her school to the state's Gifted and Talented Program. She dismissed her current academic experiences, especially in writing, as "unimportant" and referred more readily to her self-sponsored writing.

The other more proficient writers attended schools in which the value placed on composing was reflected in the provision for mini-courses in poetry, newswriting, and short narratives for students in addition to their regular language arts courses.[1] In the latter, the fourth graders were often encouraged to select and shape topics and modes in accordance with their expressed interests rather than told to write on a single topic during a specified time. Their teachers seemed to recognize that writers need time to think, to talk and to plan prior to composing. Similarly, recog-

nition that writers need audiences other than a single teacher led them to encourage their students to share their texts with peers, other classes or even unknown audiences by exchanging texts, collaborating on dramatized versions of stories to be presented to other students or writing letters to favorite authors. Although direct instruction in such topics as spelling and vocabulary were part of the curriculum, much instruction in these areas as well as most instruction in mechanics and usage occurred during the editing phase of composing. That phase, however, was clearly separate from the initial response to the meaning of the text.

At the seventh grade, students more frequently were required to write in specified modes as part of certain genre units in English or in response to assignments in social studies. However, their teachers still tended to allow students latitude in selecting their topics and liberal time to complete their assignments as Fred's description, quoted above, indicated. Their teachers often attempted to provide other audiences through such devices as a class literary journal and oral readings and presentations. Thus, although there were relatively more constraints placed upon the student's composing, there was also an attempt to help the student to engage in the task of finding a real purpose, a meaningful topic and real audiences for composing.

Contrast this approach with the curriculum and instruction available to the less proficient writers in the study. The difference was reflected in the reaction of Wallie, a fourth grader, when I suggested that he show a copy of a text that he had written in an episode to his teacher.

> W: Oh no! She might rip it up. I showed her my other story. She said it was messy. She didn't even read it—just ripped it up.

This response points directly to one cause of James' unwillingness to revise his paper in the episode because he might despoil its appearance. He had learned his lesson well.

The salient feature of this school district's language arts curriculum was a series of performance objectives designed to allow each student to progress at his/her own rate. The primary mode of instruction was a numbered set of materials containing a criterion referenced pre- and posttest as well as instructional material and exercises. Both the objectives and the material had been written by the district's curriculum committee.

In the fourth grade, the program still allowed some interaction between students and teachers as small groups read aloud and responded to questions found in the basal texts. However, much reading and most language arts instruction occurred at individual learning stations where students worked alone, unless they asked for help, on materials that would instruct, drill and test their mastery of skills necessary for correct encoding and decoding. Yet they seldom had use for the skills thought so important for encoding because opportunities for composing were limited and, it might be added, isolated. On three occasions that I observed, the topics were designated by the supplementary activities in their basal texts. Working alone on these activities, they were confronted by an assignment to write a paragraph about a topic related to the story that they had read. Without the aid of discussion with either their teacher or other students, they were expected to make a topic presented in written language sufficiently meaningful to themselves to find a purpose for writing about it within the class period. On another occasion, the source was a directive from the central administration that all students enter a district essay contest. Responding to the directive, the teacher talked to the class about the evils of littering—the subject of the essay—and then admonished them to write neatly and be careful of errors. Barbara, who won second prize in the elementary division, rewrote her paper three times to correct errors marked by her teacher. She concluded that her third draft was better because it was longer, and it was—by five words. There were no substantive changes, however, from the first to the last draft.

By seventh grade, many students refused to engage in written language, whether reading or writing. Those who did were usually required to write no more than single word or sentence answers. In their English classes, there was no longer any large or small group instruction. Instead, students moved from one objective to the next at their own pace. Composing was no longer even tied to a reading activity but was determined by the number of an objective charted on the wall. Thus, a student who had not passed the pretest for a composing objective would be given several composing exercises on assigned topics, with starter sentences or pictures on lined dittos to suggest length. Upon completion of the exercises —usually one a day— and the test, the student submitted the entire package to the teacher who recorded a single grade for the objective. Other than to circle errors in the conventions, teachers usually made no response to the texts. The student then moved through several more objectives devoted to such skills as finding main ideas or learning to use figurative language that required single word or sentence answers before moving to another objective that related to composing.

It should be emphasized that the teachers had little choice in the content or method of instruction that had been designed by a central committee. To ensure adherence to the curriculum, teachers were required to report the numbers of objectives completed by each student. They very often resembled file clerks as they stood between two boxes of folders passing out new material to one student; checking, recording and filing material completed by another student; and attempting to answer a question from another. Is it any wonder that they seemed to have neither the time nor the inclination to respond with more than a check or a grade to the students' texts when the topic and the context for composing were neither their nor their students' choices?

If these students' only source of information about the uses of written language came from this type of academic environment, it seems likely that composing would remain an alien, even dangerous activity—mined with potential for error. In fact, this was the case for the less proficient writers in this study who had been selected as their schools' best writers. Their nonacademic environments had afforded them little opportunity to explore the meaningful uses of composing by observing others who engaged in it or who evidenced interest in the child's composing efforts. Composing had been steadily isolated from the other concrete and more meaningful processes of talking and listening and, finally, even from reading. They could find little purpose for it other than to comply with an external demand to write a neat, error-free paper about an imposed topic. Because they had little experience with audiences who responded to the meaning of their texts as opposed to their correctness, they had little notion that their texts were intended to be read as opposed to being corrected. Yet Liza, who had been in the school system for only two-and-a-half years and came from a nonacademic environment where written language was valued, was able to resist the influence of her current academic experiences and continued to engage in self-sponsored writing.

Liza's behavior raises several interesting questions about the relative strength of each environment. These however, cannot be explored here. Data from this study can only begin to suggest the importance of these two environments as sources of children's views of composing and development of proficiency in writing.

Implications for Educators

Although educators can do little about children's nonacademic environments, other than to inform parents of the importance of expressing interest in and responding to their children's composing efforts, we do shape the academic environments. Recognizing that many children's first sustained exposure to written language occurs in the classroom, it seems essential that we give them reasons for wanting to learn how to use it. Primary emphasis must be placed on its meaning-making functions. Children must find authentic purposes for writing, just as they more naturally find purposes for talking. That implies that they be allowed to write on topics that emerge from their own interests and that they find real audiences who want to read as opposed to correct their texts. Obviously, older children sometimes will be required to write on assigned topics in examinations. If, however, they have developed a view of the many uses of composing and value it, they will recognize this context as one reason for composing but not the only one.

To develop the ability to engage in composing with different levels of response, the young child must explore the uses of whole language in a context free from the fear of error. As research cited earlier has shown, when children find authentic purposes for composing, they are more successful in mastering its conventions. If we divert their eyes to mastery of the component skills unrelated to whole language, we are probably also diverting their minds from the real reasons for composing.

We cannot afford such a diversion if we accept the proposition advanced by Emig (1977) that writing is a unique and powerful form of learning that serves to develop cognitive functions and by King (1978) that writing rather than reading is truly the hallmark of a literate society.

NOTE

[1]During the period of my observations, author Stephan Joseph led a week long poetry workshop for students in the middle school, and Janet Emig spoke to teachers about current research on the composing process.

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Composition Models: Dynamic and Static Imitations

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The use of models has been a mainstay of rhetoricians as far back as 3,000 B.C. when the Sumerians had students keep "copybooks" to imitate works central to the culture.[1] The Greeks, of course, are well known for advocating the use of models in discourse. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is filled with examples worthy of imitation. The Romans, too, represented by Cicero[2] and Quintilian[3] thought highly of good models that would serve the aspiring rhetorician in perfecting the substance, shape and style of his discourse. The use of models has not decreased by any means today. Well known leaders in composition such as William F. Irmscher[4] and W. Ross Winterowd[5] see models as essential to instruction in writing. Dozens of books such as *Models for Writing*[6] are devoted solely to models designed for students to imitate. Whole curricula in composition have been founded on the assumption that models serve the fledgling writer better than other approaches. For example, the Northwestern Composition Curriculum Center which has influenced the teaching of composition at all levels describes its approach this way:

> Since we feel that students learn to write by imitating those compositions that they have read, we make extensive use of professional models in our lessons, asking students to imitate these models and thereby developing their own repertoire of rhetorical devices. All of our lessons proceed from an analysis of literary models which have been carefully selected to embody the principles of composition which any particular lesson aims to teach. The student is led by discussion to discover the principle for himself and then is asked to imitate the model. Finally, he is asked to make a wider, more original application of the principle. The composition process seems to be so subjective and so difficult to master that we feel this kind of reliance on models not only teaches more effectively, but also increases the student's chance of success, thus encouraging him in the often frustrating task of learning to write. At the same time, he is learning to be a careful, mature reader of often very difficult prose.[7]

In addition to the finished work as a model more and more people in composition recently have been turning to the actual behavior of writers. One of the earliest full discussions of what writers do when they write — their writing process — is by Porter Perrin in

Writer's Guide and Index to English.[8] But Perrin like many who followed him does not stress how such processes were to be operationalized in the classroom. In addition, Perrin, like Warriner's *English Grammar and Composition II*,[9] makes the whole process too tidy, neat and linear. In Perrin's and Warriner's hands writing is a clean, clear activity for clean, clear people in clean, clear places. It has none of the surprises, sloppiness, discursiveness, reflexiveness and waste that most writers experience. Importantly, however, Perrin does recognize that behavior may be used as a model. It took the prewriting focus of D. Gordon Rohman to bring process in operation (as opposed to simply describing its results) to the attention of others.[10] Since Rohman's work many others have turned their attention to understanding the processes writers go through. Janet Emig's study of the writing processes of twelfth graders is rare in its focus on process rather than product. Emig nicely lays out how the writing process has been seen both by writers and textbook makers.[11]

What is important in the discussion above is that in both approaches to using models imitation is absolutely central. While the first focuses on the end product, the nicely wrought paragraph or essay, the second focuses on the act of writing in process. The first moves backwards, from product to trying to guess how it got the way it did. The second lays out a tentative path, a series of possibilities to be considered.

Imitation in either case is seen as desirable, a necessary activity in the growth of a writer. It is seen as necessary to learning. As Barth says, "Just as the child learns to speak imitatively, so he learns to write imitatively."[12] Winterowd supports Barth when he says, "You learn to write by (usually) unconscious imitation of what you read. You adopt this technique from that writer and another technique from another writer, and so on . . ."[13] Corbett, well regarded for his knowledge of classical rhetoric, states, "Classical rhetoric books are filled with testimonies about the value of imitation for the refinement of the many skills involved in effective speaking and writing."[14]

While all these current writers attest to the value of imitation they each stress differences. Corbett is careful to say that imitation is only a part of learning to write; studying basic principles and actual practice are necessary, too. Although Winterowd seems to say that the unconscious takes over in learning to write, much of his discussion of writing is devoted to active techniques for improving as a writer. Barth is careful to say at one point, "Students must become competent in the prewriting processes before they are faced with the task of performing later processes."[15]

Psychologists and Imitation

Psychologists do not agree about the impact of imitation on thinking and learning. Generally imitation is seen as either static or dynamic. Sahakian, for example, says,

> Of the two aspects of thinking, (1) figurative and (2) operative, it is the operative that is essential to thought, the first aspect including static, momentary, passive, and imitative states. By imitative is meant the passive interiorization or mimicking of perception and imagery, void of dynamic activity. By contrast, operative thinking is not static (dealing with states rather than processes or operations) but actively changes perception by transformations.[16]

Vygotsky, on the other hand, says that "Psychologists today cannot share the layman's belief that imitation is a mechanical activity and that anyone can imitate almost anything if shown how. To imitate, it is necessary to possess the means of stepping from something one knows to something new."[17]

The difference in point of view rests on whether imitation is seen as active or not, but few modern psychologists would deny that higher levels of knowledge and learning are acquired through dynamic interaction with the surroundings and self. The notion of assimilation through basic passivity would not be considered learning so much as reflex or conditioning or a lower kind of learning. As Piaget says,

> I think . . . that human knowledge is essentially active. To know is to assimilate reality into systems of transformation. To know is to transform reality in order to understand how a certain state is brought about. . . . Knowing an object means acting upon it, constructing systems of transformations that can be carried out on or with this object. Knowing reality means constructing systems of transformations that correspond, more or less, to reality.[18]

Even for Piaget there is a part of knowledge — note his "essentially" — that is of a non-active kind, assimilated passively. This is probably the traditional notion of what imitation is. The metaphor of the mind soaking up its surroundings is a notion of imitation that is not too useful to teachers. In such a vision of imitation, the mind of the imitator has not been engaged and has not transformed the incoming information. This kind of imitation is passive and does not bring about change in the individual.

The other view sees imitation as dynamic. It can transform the individual, and it can transform even better with instruction. As Vygotsky says,

> In the child's development . . . imitation and instruction play a major role. They bring out the specifically human qualities of the mind and lead the child to new developmental levels. In learning to speak, as in learning school subjects, imitation is indispensible. What the child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow. Therefore the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it; it must be aimed not so much at the ripe as at the ripening function.[19]

Regardless of your notion of imitation, significant learning activity is active, and becomes possible through activity, whether mental or physical. As Edwin R. Guthrie notes, "we learn only what we do." To him "movement [is] the key to learning."[20] We do not simply react to stimuli; we act upon them as they act on us. We transform stimuli, and they transform us. We are not the simple recipients of an S-R world.

Research on Using Models

Research in early language development suggests that imitation and the transformation of information begin very early for human beings. Language is acquired through active imitation, and now evidence exists to show that children have a notion of writing well before they enter school. When asked to write they will closely approximate the graphemic configuration of writing in their culture. For example, a Chinese child will approximate the characters in Chinese, a North American child will imitate the script of written English, and an Arabian child will imitate the script of Arabic.[21] The natural tendency to imitate even written form gives support to the idea that models are useful, perhaps even indispensible.

The research on the use of models for teaching composition is scanty. The few attempts (with perhaps one exception) have concluded that "the use of literary models in teaching written composition has no effect upon improvement in overall composition skills (as measured by STEP Writing Test Form 2,)[22] or have been inconclusive, as in Mills' attempt with fifth graders,[23] or have reached questionable conclusions, as in the case of Wheeler's study which showed significant growth for students exposed to models. Commenting on the latter, Schiff points out that the part of the STEP Test that supports Wheeler's claim" was the 'critical thinking' subscale, [which is] more a measure of analytic reading than of synthetic writing skills."[24]

A unique approach in research on the use of models is Schiff's. Modeling traditionally involves analysis of the model, perhaps some oral or written student generated examples of whatever is being highlighted (i.e. use of hyperbole, transitional devices, topic sentence development, etc.), and then the assignment to go and do likewise in a longer essay or story. Often modeling follows the simplest pattern: first analysis (mental manipulation), then the assignment to go and do likewise. One of the main features of what Schiff did differently (though there are other differences too) was to take paragraphs, cut them up into sentences, have students manipulate them and come up with a coherent whole by putting the sentences in some order. Schiff's system

> referred to as ROMAC, an acronym for "reorder, manipulate, analyze, compare," consisted of five steps in which students: 1) received the randomly arranged sentence strips and were told that on each strip was a sentence that someone had written after exposure to particular visual, aural, gustatory, and/or olfactory stimuli (opportunity for recognizing the "difficulty" of illogical arrangement); 2) were instructed to reorder the sentences by manipulating the strips (clarifying and defining the problem); 3) analyzed their reordered decisions by answering questions about what they had done (searching for clues to the sentences' arrangement); 4) compared and/or contrasted their ordering and analysis with those of the original author (examining and evaluating various alternative suggestions); 5) wrote one or two paragraphs reacting to stimuli similar to those that inspired the sentences on the strips . . .[25]

Note that Schiff stays with the traditional format by having students imitate the whole structure (paragraphs) they are manipulating and analyzing. But what is very different is that manipulation comes first, and then they analyze their decisions. In what Schiff calls simply "a traditional models approach" the student begins with analysis and does no manipulation (unless the imitation of the model can be considered manipulation). Schiff's focus on physical and conceptual manipulation fits nicely with the thinking of current psychologies of learning. To quote Piaget again: "To my way of thinking knowing an object does not mean copying it — it means acting upon it."[26]

Another interesting aspect of Schiff's approach is that he takes the model and breaks it down into parts (sentences) for manipulation. In what he calls the trad-

itional approach, he implies that this is not done — the model is left whole and is analyzed to draw relationships and to observe various principles. While many approaches to using product models (as opposed to process or behavioral models) involve manipulation, what is unique about Schiff's approach is that students manipulate before they analyze and make decisions. Just the opposite is true of other product model approaches.

Models — Some Reservations

Before moving on to discuss various ways models are used in teaching it is important to reiterate that not everyone agrees that models are necessarily a good thing. Usually what is objected to is static, unthoughtful imitation or a simple display of craft. For example, in the "Phaedrus" Socrates questions the use of models and imitation. After Phaedrus has read him Lysias' clever speech Socrates imitates its style, structure and arguments and produces a speech that is more clever. Phaedrus who is at first completely taken by Lysias' cleverness is even more enchanted by Socrates' rhetoric. Socrates criticizes both speeches and rejects them as false. He then discusses how the superficial nature (outward appearance) of rhetoric (which can easily be imitated by charlatans who are not guided first by a desire for truth) must be rejected in favor of true rhetoric—a search through dialectic for truth. Simple display of talent or style is debased rhetoric. As H. N. Fowler says of Plato's intent:

> Only he who has acquired all of this knowledge [the nature of the soul, kinds of argument, and particulars of speech making] is a perfect orator, so far as perfection is attainable by man; but acquisition of this knowledge is a great task, which no one would undertake merely for the purpose of persuading his fellows; a higher purpose, the perfection of his soul and the desire to serve the gods, must animate the spirit of the student of the real art of rhetoric.[25]

Others too have cautioned against the harmful effects of imitation and the use of models. Hughes Mearns in the late 1920s complained that students substituted what they had read or heard for the real experience necessary for effective writing:

> All their streams ripple, all their lakes are silver (so is their moon), all their trees whisper in the gentle — guess what? Breeze? Right! Their rain always beats down or it falls in torrents; their evening shadows are purple; their whippoorwills call tenderly mournful in the solemn night.[26]

Corbett also cautions that too much reliance on models and imitation can be a potential problem.[27] In a list of quotes supporting imitation he uses one from Maugham that discusses how imitation may be good for the writer to try to write like a Swift in order to play with language, but to write like Swift in the twentieth century would hinder both writer and reader. Swift's style was fine for his time, but it would be an anachronism for a twentieth-century writer.[30]

The concern in almost all cautionary statements is that the model will be aped, the imitation will be static, lacking originality. The fear is that the individual will become effaced, or worse, get stuck with nothing but the ability to ape. The hope behind using models is that models will serve as a bridge to uncovering the individual writing talents in each person, but because we do not know how the transfer takes place we remain uneasy with the method. Also, there is the fear as expressed by Emig that the model will become a pointless end in itself.[31]

Another problem with using product models is that the focus in such an approach to writing initially is not on a "felt need," a problem, or an idea, which is where most real writing begins. Instead the focus is on a form or structure that has to be followed (i.e., a style imitated, a sentence pattern or paragraph pattern followed). Students do not begin with their concerns or their interests; they begin with a complete structure. The structure dominates and figuring out its parts or shape becomes the problem to be solved. What happens is that the reason for writing can change when we use product models. We shift from initial problem solving in a social or intellectual context to playing with a puzzle or performing an exercise. We shift from something real to something artificial. Of course, some justify such exercises as a way of improving skills in writing after the fact. That is, when a student has completed a paper she can then play with various forms or style so that the effectiveness of each can be compared with her approach. If, for example, parallel sentences will add force to an argument, such structures can be noted in finished pieces and their effect analyzed. Then the student can rework her own paper using similar structures.

The central problem, then, in using product models is how and when they are used. If models are used as problems surface in students' writing and are directly related to problems students are attempting to solve, then it makes sense to show how others have dealt with such problems. At such a time using models ties directly to the needs of writers. However, to start with a model and analyze it in order to have students fill out a similar form is to create an artificial exercise. To make the model dynamic means to use it

to solve both life problems and writing problems. Obviously, a simple approach to using product models won't do. The teacher needs to be actively involved with students' writing and to determine the appropriate place and time a model will best allow for dynamic interaction. If the model is presented as a problem in itself rather than as a solution to a real, in process problem, then it may become more of a barrier to learning to write than a help.

Models and Teaching

Instruction in writing using models usually focuses on some aspect of what Rohman calls "prewriting,"[32] on form, organization or arrangement, on style, or on the overall process that writers go through from the time they get an idea for a piece of writing until the piece is completed. The focus in "prewriting" is on discovering what is known, what are the problems, what may be important and a host of other concerns that are felt should be dealt with before the writer begins writing the paper. It is seen as a time of exploring, casting about for ideas, of inquiry.

Rohman sees the prewriting stage as the time in which the writer "assimilates his 'subject' to himself." Prewriting is an active stage which deals with the kind of "'thinking' that precedes writing." It calls for actively imitating behaviors that enhance thinking. The three methods Rohman advocates are: "(1) the keeping of a journal, (2) the practice of some principles derived from the religious meditation, and (3) the use of analogy." The emphasis in all three approaches is to get students personally and deeply involved "in their subjects and themselves." For Rohman those are the signs of "good writers." The approaches offer models of behavior for students and allow students to explore different aspects of prewriting. As Rohman says, "The Journal encouraged students to discover themselves, the meditation put into their hands a 'puzzle form' of discovery. The analogy, we hoped, would illustrate the 'bisociation' of all experience."[33]

Another advocate of focusing on what comes before the act of writing finished pieces is Peter Elbow who devotes considerable attention to keeping freewriting diaries. A freewriting diary is simply a collection of daily writings that are done non-stop, are automatic without the internal writing censor that many have developed because of schooling. Elbow advises the would-be writer "to put down whatever is in your mind. . . . [keep writing]. The only requirement is that you never stop." Elbow lays out ways of pulling out gems from the "garbage" of freewriting, how to recognize "the center of gravity" in a piece, how to edit and so forth. It could be said that he has a whole system, but the stress is not on cleaning up but on getting the stuff out and down. His behavioral model is a free swinging modification of Rohman's use of the journal. He believes the ideas, identification, personalization and power will come simply through the act of letting the mind and spirit flow onto the paper.[34]

A very different approach from Elbow's is Larson's which focuses on using classical invention in ways that will help today's students. Invention in classical rhetoric (and in many revised approaches to rhetoric)[35] came before arrangement and style in the construction of a discourse. Invention was the art "of finding something—anything—to say about any chosen subject." Larson argues for a renewal of this art so that students can

> see what is of interest and value in their experiences, to enable them to recognize when something they see or read or feel warrants a response from them, in other words to stimulate active inquiry into what is happening around them in place of the indifference or passivity with which they often face other than their most dramatic experiences.[36]

To help students explore more possibilities Larson argues that we must be sure that students understand as fully as possible "the facts, and possible relationships among the facts, about experiences on which they might write . . ." The way to do this is through showing students how systematically to explore what they know through questions designed to increase knowledge. Larson lays out approximately seventy-five questions that deal with observing closely, relating events or processes, dealing with abstract concepts, comparing features, exploring propositions and investigating questions. He does not expect students to plod through all his questions, but to use them where and when appropriate. He says that such an approach must come first and needs emphasis; arranging information, organizing, playing with style, and so forth, though important, may be overly stressed. And they surely must "be servants of an idea, not its masters, which is what they sometimes seem to be. If there is nothing to say, there is no reason to spend much energy on how to say it."[37]

Rohman, Elbow and Larson all have in common the desire to help students discover things to say and to do so with fullness and understanding. Larson's question system has the virtue, if applied reasonably, of pushing the student to explore ideas for full significance. And his approach, like Rohman's and Elbow's

offers a way to discovering, of being creative, of inventing. As a model it shows how to explore ideas. It is much more logical and systematic than Elbow's approach and offers considerably more opportunity for teachers to guide students in ways of exploring ideas. Elbow's approach leaves almost everything up to the student.

Most approaches to using models start with the product as opposed to the process approach of Rohman, Elbow and Larson. In the *product model* approach the teacher generally starts with analysis and then expects students to produce something similar. If the research on models indicates anything, it indicates that such an approach, if it affects anything, affects reading skill.[30] Any dynamic interaction is between students and text (model). Students, unless they are physically manipulating parts of texts as they do in writing, are behaving as readers. This is not to say that the relationship is static; it is simply to point out that such an approach does not go far enough. Readers interact with texts mentally; writers interact with texts and parts of texts both mentally and physically. They actively manipulate parts of texts (in their minds or on paper) while trying to solve a problem. As pointed out in the discussion of Schiff, "The key to achieving . . . internalization was the combination of mental reordering and physical manipulation. . . ."[31]

Some educators recognize the need for manipulation in learning a model. What is important in such approaches is that the teacher actively intervenes as students try to construct imitations based on the model. They do not introduce the model and leave it at that. McCabe, for example, after elaborate procedures for selecting and constructing appropriate models reports that he introduces the model (a paragraph) and then eliminates all words in it that carry clear semantic meaning while retaining function words. He then has students attempt their own versions, line by line; these are compared, and then everyone proceeds to the next. A sample sentence from a paragraph would be changed in this fashion:

> The Morgan horse is the most useful animal in working a ranch.
>
> The _____ is the most _____ _____ _____ in _____.

A student might rewrite the sentence as, "The atomic sub is the most feared ship in the United States Navy." McCabe says his approach is especially useful for what he calls *dysfunctional* writers. He says that though such an approach seems rigid at first, in his work with students he has noted that "as students develop proficiency in the use of a model, they tend to depart from a rigid adherence to its lines."[32] Apparently because the form is internalized as a written form in motion it becomes a dynamic possibility.

Hillocks, McCabe and McCampbell suggest ways teachers can use a student prose model in a dynamic fashion. Students read a story called "Death of a City" by a ninth-grade student, and then analyze its structure which is elegant in its simplicity. The first paragraph gives the setting and brief description; the second paragraph introduces various characters in the setting; the third paragraph plays with time and further description; paragraph four introduces the disaster quietly, calmly; paragraph five is explicit in description of the disaster; paragraph six has the characters introduced earlier react to the disaster; paragraph seven (the last) contains a description after the disaster with a touch of irony (if desired).

After the analysis students come up with settings for various kinds of disasters (sinking ships, airplanes in trouble, floods, etc.). They write a description of their setting referring to the model used in class; these are compared and discussed. Other students work in pairs to develop their beginning ideas. The rest of the story is then modelled on the paragraphs studied in the story. But at each step the teacher points to particulars of development in the model. Students are not left to flounder on their own.[33]

Hillocks, McCabe and McCampbell also give detailed examples on teaching students to write haiku, cinquain, tanka, blues stanza form, plus many other forms. In teaching haiku, they lay out minute by minute how a lesson of this kind might go. They introduce the model, break it down and slowly with the class build an example based on their detailed analysis. Students are actively involved, manipulating words, lines and ideas from beginning to end.[34]

Textbooks are filled with examples of models to use for teaching form, organization and style. D'Angelo,[35] Irmscher,[36] Winterowd[37] and many others give numerous examples of models to be analyzed and imitated. Although they advise that students should proceed in some sort of step by step fashion, they do not lay out in detail how this is to be accomplished through instruction. What Hillocks, McCabe and McCampbell supply is how instruction can make the work with product oriented models more dynamic. They set up ways to keep students interacting at many stages in the writing of a piece. Still all these approaches differ from Schiff's in that the movement is backwards from finished product to analysis to manipulation. Schiff's proceeds from manipulation to analysis of a possible solution, which seems closer to actual writing behavior patterns.[38]

An Overall Process Model

While there are many ways to describe the overall process of writing, [illegible] the moment an idea occurs or a problem is felt to the time we have a finished piece, one of the most useful models for instruction has been developed by Wallace C. Douglas[2] based on the earlier work of Porter Perrin. Douglas' description includes the three large stages of prewriting, writing and postwriting. The prewriting stage encompasses the five activities of analyzing the writing assignment, searching for a good idea, examining what one knows and needs to now about a topic, gathering information and organizing the paper. These stages, of course, vary or occur simultaneously to a greater or lesser degree depending on the writer, the task and the situation. The next stage is the writing stage. Now in reality writing may occur all along the way from the time one gets an idea (free freewriting, jots notes to the self, does an impromptu because of an idea, and so forth) to the time the text is finished. The point is that the writing stage can come at the beginning, middle and end of the process. The idea in the model presented here is that usually focused writing, in which a writer is trying to get out all that is known at the moment, usually comes after preliminary work. The model, of course, just fits the kinds of expository and argumentative writing (essays, term papers, research reports, etc.) done in school and magazines such as *The Smithsonian*, *Scientific American* and specialty magazines. The third stage includes revising, proofreading and working with an editor or teacher. For the overall process to be seen fully we must embed in it such recursive activities as journal writing, freewriting, note-taking, impromptu writing, observing, interviewing, spontaneous revision while writing, etc.

The model above is just that: a model of writing behavior. It is hypothetical, and in any particular circumstance does not describe what a particular writer does in a specific situation. We all write differently depending upon our audience, how we want to be viewed, what we are riting about, what we know about our subject, and that structure we are trying to develop. The model, however, despite its lack of particularity does serve as useful guide in working with students. It allows makers to open up to students ways of examining that own behavior as writers as they move through invention, revision and other writing processes. On of the goals of teachers of writing should not ont be to help writers examine and think about what hey have written, but to help them see how they function as writers and to assess the effectiveness of that writing behavior.

The model sets up possibilities against which students can measure actual experience. For example, at the step where students organize their papers the teacher might ask them for an informal outline in order to push them into making some decisions about materials they have collected and the direction they are going. Instead of an outline the teacher might ask for a list of, say, thirty main ideas, examples or points, and then have students group their items by common features. As an alternative the teacher might ask them (after they have done some investigating or thinking or note-taking) to do an in-class impromptu as if it were the night before the paper were due. Under such pressure students quickly discover what they know and don't know. The point of all these procedures is to show three ways of going about organizing materials. Some writers make outlines, some make lists, some write flat out to discover their organization so they can refer to it when they write a more directed "first draft", some use all three depending upon what they are writing, some use none of these but instead outline in their heads, work directly from note cards, make audio tapes, dictate to someone else, and so forth. The point is that these are all ways of going about organizing what is known, and they need to be explored and discussed in class. Is one more effective than another? Under what circumstances? For whom? Actively involving students as decision makers lets them see that they need to develop their own processes for writing. The answer is not in the book, not in the writing process model, the answer is in them.

Obviously organization occurs at other places in writing than just before one begins a draft (for some the draft is their way of organizing), and this variability in the writing process needs to be attended to if students are to see writing as dynamic rather than as the static, linear, clear process described by Warriner. But Warriner's general description is much like Douglas' process model. What makes them different is what goes on in instruction. In Warriner the approach is taught as if it were the only proper way to proceed. In Douglas the approach is designed to guide examination, so the model is not simply one of straightforward action but of interior examination (self analysis), manipulation, and exploration. The first defines its own limits, the second opens up possibilities. Much like the product models presented earlier the difference is in the way models are used in instruction. Naive use of models assumes students will learn once they are presented with the model. More thoughtful approaches see the model as a way of detailing instruction — a way of actually proceeding.

In Douglas, for example, the revision stage in-

dudes more than the typical advice to be sure "to clean up your paper." Revision is made operational by devoting class time to it. Students are asked to come to class with the first draft of a paper they have been developing in class for a week or two (sometimes longer). The teacher, using a student model, then uses an edit sheet (all members of the class have a copy) to go over the draft to show students what a reader might notice. The edit sheet attempts to raise questions that pertain to the particular kind of writing being examined.[30] The teacher with the class fills out the edit sheet in the same fashion that will be expected of the students when they are grouped. After modeling what is wanted on the edit sheet and how students are to proceed with each other, they are put in groups, given another edit sheet and asked to work on each other's papers. The edit sheets are then collected, and these are examined and returned with comments.

The point is that the behavior desired (actually revising) is modeled in class and students imitate the model immediately on each other's papers. Students are actually shown one way of proceeding; they are not simply told about it. The revision process needs to be taught, not simply called for. To learn to revise means to behave as a reader, to ask questions readers ask, to distance oneself, to make changes, to try other possibilities, and so forth. Some revisers learn to proceed on their own, but most students are not effective revisers.

Like other writing processes, revision can be taught through modeling the behavior desired. We cannot simply point to what we want; we must show in a dynamic, active way how to do what many effective writers do. The problem with most models used in teaching writing, whether product or process models, is that students are not shown how to proceed; they are simply told what to do. People learn through activity, that is the way of life. They do not passively wait to be filled. They seek out, engage, manipulate, transform their surroundings and are transformed. We would all benefit from listening to Horace when he says in "The Art of Poetry," "I shall bid the clever imitator look to life . . . for his real model, and draw thence language true to life."[31]

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The Student Editing Method

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Utilizing students in the editorial role for each others' writing is a pedagogic strategy which is currently becoming popular in the teaching of writing. This instructional device evolved originally from having students respond to each other's writing in order to help them develop a sense of audience. This provided them with a wider relationship than the customary audience of one — the teacher. Using students to provide additional feedback seemed a more productive and time saving alternative to the traditional method of feedback coming exclusively from the teacher.

In composition class, the only person to read, critique, and grade student writing had been the teacher, which resulted in students learning to write for a limited audience. In fact, they were basically writing for one person and quickly learned that all they needed to do was figure out what the teacher wanted to read and try to approximate this expectation. The consequence of such writing was that it was not genuine. It became stilted academic prose. The price paid by the students and the teacher was boredom. Students did not become engaged with the writing, nor did they experiment with different styles and voices as pointed out in Britton's (1975) study.

In addition, many students didn't trust the feedback they received from the teacher, for they assumed that the teacher, because s/he was from a different generation, did not understand the points students were trying to make. Many students thought that if they shared their writing with peers their friends would immediately be able to relate to it.

What grew out of these realizations was that there was a need to encourage the use of a wider audience for feedback by having groups of students read and discuss each other's writings. Hopefully, teachers believed, the following changes in students' conceptions of their writings would occur.

1. students would begin to understand that they were not expressing their ideas clearly and completely;
2. students would have a greater commitment to their writing since their peers would be examining their efforts;
3. students would have many readers as is more typical of written communication.

Because students tend to trust their peers, a comment from a friend which questions the clarity of a thought or the purpose of the paper is often more palatable than responses from a teacher.

Those of us who have used the group method for

purposes of audience have noticed that students develop a greater awareness of the complexity of writing and the need to fully and clearly develop their thoughts. They also gain a deeper commitment to their writing. Students who view the teacher as being overcritical perceive peer response as being impartial and accurate. They find that peer feedback motivates them to write and revise their papers more carefully. They also begin to see the commonality of their problems, that their difficulties are not unique and, therefore, they do not feel embarrassed when sharing their writing or feel threatened by someone discovering that they are indeed weak writers, as they all have weaknesses. An unexpected plus has been an increase in class cohesion, good feeling, and a lessening of the sense of anonymity. In fact, close friendships have developed as a result of the sharing of writing in groups.

The benefits of using peers as audiences prompted teachers to experiment further with this method. Why not use students as editors of each other's work? In the process of pointing out weaknesses or errors in each other's papers, students could learn from each other. Students could develop a stronger discriminatory eye when rereading their own papers. They could learn from the feedback others give them as well as from the responses they give others. The picture this created was of an optimal learning setting: students learning from the teacher, from each other, and from their own insights.

Several years ago, we, the authors of this article, decided to incorporate into our teaching strategy with our freshman college students the method of using peers as audience. We devised group work sheets which would guide the discussion for each student's paper. The following are three samples:

SAMPLE 1

The following tasks are designed to aid your discussion. Please feel free to raise other issues that you feel are important.

1. Each writer in turn should read his/her paper aloud to the group as group members follow on their copies. Then each member of the group should write one sentence summarizing what s/he feels is the focus, the main idea. Then compare your sentences. If you pretty much agree, the paper has a focus. If not, discuss with the writer what you see as the problem. If s/he doesn't have a focus, help her/him find one that s/he feels comfortable working with. Once you find it, the recorder should summarize the focus below.
2. Read through the writer's paper again only this time *underline* all the factual information the writer gives to support his/her focus. The recorder should list this information below. Discuss whether you feel this information is presented with sufficient detail. Remember, good writing must be convincing; the writer's opinions are not enough. They should be supported with facts and examples.
3. Is additional information needed to make the paper clearer and more complete? Help the writer get the facts and help her/him find the questions that still need to be asked. List at least five suggestions and questions.
4. Is there anything in the paper that you feel doesn't belong, that has nothing to do with the focus? List these below.
5. What do you find to be the paper's greatest strengths?
6. What do you find to be the paper's greatest weaknesses?
7. For the next class meeting, the writer should bring in a new draft of this paper.

SAMPLE 2

The following tasks are designed to help you decide on the best way to organize your papers. Complete all of the tasks for one group member's paper at a time.

Procedure: Each person in turn reads his/her paper aloud to the group as the other group members follow. Then answer each of the following questions individually. After you answer the questions, discuss your answers and reach a consensus for each question. The recorder should record your decisions in the spaces below.

1. What is the main focus of this paper? Summarize it in one sentence.
2. What are the sub-ideas which develop the focus of this paper?
3. What information (facts, examples) does the writer give to support each sub-idea?
4. How does the writer arrange the information? Cite specific example from the paper.
5. Is the arrangement effective? Explain why it is or isn't.
6. How would you suggest the writer arrange the details for maximum effect? If you agree with the

writer's arrangement, explain why and cite specific examples. If you are suggesting an alternate way, support your choice by citing specific examples.

7. Are there any sub-ideas or details which you think do not belong in the essay? If yes, list them below and explain why you think they are off-topic.

Based on the group's responses to the above questions, the writer should decide whether her/his paper needs to be reorganized. If it does, rewrite the paper for the next class meeting.

SAMPLE 3

The following tasks are designed to aid your discussion. Please feel free to raise other issues.

1. Each writer in turn should read each of his/her versions to the group a~ the group follows on their copies. Then each member of the group should write one sentence summarizing what s/he feels is the focus of each version. Decide which version's focus is clearer and sufficiently specific. Summarize your discussion below.
2. What version do you like best? Support your choice by citing specific examples from each version. If you do not find that you prefer one version, then select parts of each version you like best. Support your choices by citing examples.
3. Which paragraph in each version is the strongest? Explain why, citing examples from the paragraph.
4. Which paragraph in each version do you find the weakest? Explain why, citing examples from the paragraphs.
5. Which version or which combination of versions do you think should become the final draft? Support your opinion with specific examples.
6. The writer should bring in a final, typed draft of this paper.

The feedback students received as a result of the group completing the task sheet for each writing augmented the feedback from us. Using the peer response method for: 1) focus (thesis); 2) details; 3) development; 4) organization; and 5) general reactions proved to be impressively successful.

As we gained experience in using this method, we began to notice that there were certain imperatives to insure its profitable use: Directions needed to be explicit; the teacher had to visit the groups continually; students had to be committed to the process and could not use the group for socializing purposes; and students had to come regularly and prepared. Unfortunately, the last two requirements were not always met by all members of the groups; therefore, those *who were serious about the task felt frustrated when* other group members did not respond to the essay being criticized. When the group method elicited general responses from students — e.g., "I don't understand what you mean here"; "I don't know what your paper is about"; "You didn't give enough information"; "I can't follow your argument" — even if some students didn't participate, it still served as a vehicle for some feedback in addition to the teacher's. The comments made by those who participated helped the students understand that perhaps they failed to:

1. consider their audience;
2. include sufficient details when they were writing;
3. organize their thoughts logically.

It became clear to students that although they understood what they had written, others did not. Students began to recognize their egocentricity and began attempting to de-center—to achieve some degree of distance from their writing — and role play a selected audience.

Some other advantages of having students respond to each other's writing are that they learn to discriminate more accurately; they become better judges of which expressions sound better; they become exposed to a greater variety of writing. Although much of this writing is poor, at least they begin to understand why it is poor. Traditionally, students only read and responded to model essays in an assigned text. With this method, students apply the techniques they glean from published writings to their own writing. Additionally, appropriately placed reading assignments will help students balance their perspectives. The more students are exposed to writing samples, the better the chance that you will integrate the appropriate components of the writing process. By reading each other's writings, students do a great deal of reading, more than they would normally do in a writing class.

We chose to go a step further, as did others in our profession, and use this method for editing. We created new group discussion sheets for this purpose (a sample follows) and we attempted to teach students how to examine a paper for sentence structure, grammar and usage, punctuation, spelling, style, structure, etc.

SAMPLE 4

The following tasks are designed to aid your discussion. Please feel free to raise other issues you feel are *important*.

1. Each writer in turn should read his/her final draft aloud to the group as the group follows on their copies. As you read, listen and look carefully for anything that does not seem right and place a pencil mark in the margin of that line.

2. Examine each paragraph in the essay to see if it is clearly written. Go through one paragraph at a time answering the following questions for each individual paragraph:

   a. Which sentence in this paragraph is the strongest?
   Explain why.

   b. Which sentence in this paragraph is the weakest?
   Explain why.

   c. Are all the ideas clearly expressed in whole sentences which are properly punctuated? If not, which ones aren't and what recommendations would you make to the writer about those sentences?

   d. Does the writer vary the sentence structure or does s/he basically stick to one sentence pattern? Cite examples. If the writer basically uses one sentence pattern, help the writer join ideas so that the sentence patterns vary.

   e. Does one sentence logically lead to the next? If not, what do you think is the problem? Are transitional words or phrases needed? If so, which ones?

   f. Are there any errors in grammar, usage, spelling, typing? Point these out to the writer.

   g. Does the writer use a particular word or phrase too often? If so, which ones? Help the writer find other words or phrases which are synomymous.

3. Are there any other suggestions you would like to make about this paragraph? If not, move on to the next paragraph and answer questions a-g.

4. Are there any suggestions you would like to make about the entire paper? Have all your markings in the margin been discussed? If not, do so now.

At first, we gave brief lessons on specific editing skills. Then we divided the students into working groups of four or five and guided them in the discussion of each paper. We provided them with our group discussion sheets and visited each group, helping them over the rough spots. We spent approximately half the semester teaching our students how to read a paper for errors. Afterwards, we gave the groups greater autonomy. Although we ran into problems, which we will discuss later, we managed to convince ourselves that the students were truly helping each other and themselves in eliminating errors from their papers.

During the course of the semester, we heard rumblings from our students, such as "This is like the blind leading the blind"; "S/he told me this is wrong, yet you told me it is correct" or vice versa; "S/he is always giving me misinformation." But we persisted. We assumed that such rumblings occurred because our editing lessons were weak or because our discussion sheets did not give adequate instruction; therefore, each semester we attempted to improve the lesson editing techniques and the task sheets. It was to no avail. The rumblings continued.

It took us some time to realize that when it comes to editing skills, no one can replace the teacher. Perhaps, if our students had been taught to edit from the early grades on, we would have had greater success. Our college freshman students not only had absolutely no editing skills, but they had great difficulty even constructing correct sentences. It became clear to us that, in fact, using students as editors was indeed "the blind leading the blind."

We concluded that the peer response method can:

1. best provide students with a wide audience;
2. raise the students level of consciousness about what factors need to be considered when writing an essay;
3. aid students in recognizing that they are having problems with organization, development of ideas and/or specificity (student papers are typically filled with generalizations).

However, it cannot be used as a tool for developing editorial techniques if students lack or have very little knowledge of writing skills. In other words, the problems were manifold. Our students had very poor sentence skills, grammar and usage skills, punctuation skills, etc. Therefore, it would take at least a semester, if not more, to improve these skills to the point where they could give each other accurate feedback. Most students could not even detect any errors in other

students' writings. If they did detect some errors, they could not explain why they were incorrect or offer suggestions as to how to correct them. An even greater drawback was that when some students did offer *suggestions, they were e*ither incorrect or a poor alternative to what the writer had submitted.

Each semester we had our students evaluate the course, and we would like to share with you some of their comments concerning peer editing:

> This writing course could improve if the members of the groups criticized more strongly.
>
> I don't think it's a good idea to have students teach themselves when they don't really know the rules well.
>
> It's hard critiquing other people's papers because I never know what to say. I don't usually see much wrong with them.
>
> I don't feel I know enough about writing to tell other students what's wrong with their writing.
>
> Many times someone tells me to make this or that change in my paper; when you see it you (the teacher) tell me to change it again.

Although using peers as editors might appear to be a pedagogically superior method of helping students internalize writing skills, the pitfalls proved to be so many as to almost negate the advantages. This is not to say that this method should not be used at all; we feel it should be incorporated into the classroom strategy but only in moderation. It should be an addition to (certainly not to the exclusion of) feedback from the instructor in individual conferences with students. It should, as well, be used only under certain conditions:

1. the groups should be constructed carefully; students in each group should complement each other's strengths and weaknesses, thereby, to some degree, eliminating the problem of "the blind leading the blind." This necessitates an accurate assessment of each student's writing skills;
2. students should not be asked to do anything they do not know well;
3. in any class period, the method should be used after a lesson has been given on a particular skill or after a review of a previously learned skill. This will also eliminate problems with late students.
4. students need to be constantly reminded to criticize only when they are fairly certain they are right and not to criticize simply to show they're involved.

Our conclusion, based on our experiences and on the feedback from our students, is that the method of using peers as editors should be practiced in moderation, with good judgment, and with complete knowledge of the students' capabilities. Not all English teachers are good editors and they have had years of training. It is imperative that we match our pedagogy appropriately with our students' abilities. Utilizing students in the editorial role can be one effective strategy for teaching writing, but it certainly should not be used to the exclusion of other methods. Instead, it should be used to enhance the other forms of instruction already in wide use among teachers.

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Business Writing: Observations and Implications for Teaching Composition

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It is now popular and, apparently, profitable to lament the wretched quality of writing done in business and government. Edwin Newman, for example, surely has done well by writing books and making television appearances in which he delights and horrifies us with examples of inept or deceitful writing. A casual look at some business writing may seem to confirm our worst suspicions. Consider the following examples. The first is excerpted from a memo written by a bookkeeper in an insurance company; the bookkeeper is telling an agent why the agent received less commission than he expected.

> When we have a lapse, cancellation or NSF less than 6 months in force we reverse those contracts off advances. If one pays six months only and lapses we do not. Therefore, the three months advanced over a six month lapse sort of equals out the ones which pay any premium at all then cancel, lapse or NSF and we charge back.

Granted, this is only an excerpt, but the rest of the memo does not clarify any of this passage. For example, nothing in the rest of the letter would help the reader understand what happens when "three months [are] advanced over a six month lapse." One may guess that, in this context, *NSF* means *nonsufficient funds*. But I was a little perplexed to find NSF used as a verb, as it apparently is in the phrase "cancel, lapse or NSF."

Another troublesome piece of writing comes from the insurance company where the bookkeeper works. Apparently, one way insurance companies make money is, in effect, to lend money to banks. Banks in turn lend this money to their customers. When the banks' customers repay the loans, a large chunk of principal and interest is passed back to the insurance company. The following letter confirms an insurance company's willingness to make one of these loans to a bank.

> Re: Mortgage Loan No. _____
> Dear _____:
>
> This letter will serve as our commitment for our participation in the above mortgage loan. It is our understanding that this loan is to be for $185,000, with our participation to be 90 percent or $165,000 for 10 years to net us 9¼ percent [interest].
>
> Sincerely yours,

The person who showed me this letter had in his file other letters almost exactly like this one. Some of the details varied from letter to letter. But otherwise, writing these letters was simply a matter of using a standard form and filling in certain blanks to suit the occasion: "This loan is in the amount of _____ to be paid back over a period of _____ years at an interest rate of _____ percent." One could program a computer to compose such a letter.

One final example of business writing appeared on the cover of a catalogue distributed by a company that publishes a widely used series of standardized tests.

> The prices listed herein conform with the provisions of the Executive Order stabilizing prices, wages and rents announced on August 15, 1971, and subsequent implementing orders and directives. Planned price adjustments for 1971 have been temporarily suspended.

This was not written by a computer, but it might as well have been. It has all the warmth of an anonymous voice coming over a public address system. The passage is lifeless and abstract, and it obscures as much information as it conveys. For example, the phrase *price adjustment* allows the possibility of price decreases as well as increases. But I doubt that "planned price adjustments" included substantial reductions in prices.

In some respects, these pieces of writing might appear to justify our misgivings about writing that is done in business. Such writing may entail a highly specialized use of language that is intelligible only to a very limited audience. It may require little more than the mindless use of a formula, or suffer from a bland impersonality of style. It may exhibit all of these qualities simultaneously.

These three pieces of writing have been emphasized so as not to oversimplify or to ignore problems that exist. Yet in the remainder of this article it will be suggested that the picture is not so bleak as it may seem. There is reason to think that some of the writing done in business is interesting and complex and that our understanding of it may help us see what we need to do in order to improve our own teaching of writing.

To illustrate this point, I will look closely at several pieces of writing done at the insurance company mentioned earlier. I obtained them by asking workers at the insurance company to save a copy of everything they wrote for a two week period. The first piece of writing consists of two notes—one printed, one in longhand—written on a statement of account submitted by an insurance agent. Apparently, the agent who submitted the statement made two mistakes: He forgot to fill in the date of the statement and he entered a total in the wrong place. The handwritten and printed messages are telling the agent of the error of his ways.

Printed note:

> Fred, I only allow guys to miss [i.e., fail to include] two dates.
>
> N.

Handwritten note:

> Fred, if you put the agent total on the bottom of the page [i.e., in the place indicated on the statement form], I'll have more room to holler and yell.
>
> Nancy[1]

In these notes to the agent, the writer had made a number of choices. The writer chose *not* to ignore the agent's mistakes and chose to address the agent personally rather than write a general memo to all agents concerning the importance of filling out statements correctly. Further, the writer chose to scrawl a note on the account sheet rather than write a separate memo or letter. The writer chose not to issue a direct command or instruction. In place of writing "Please put . . ." or "You must put . . .," the writer said, "If you put the agent total on the bottom of the page, I'll have more room to holler and yell." Finally, the writer chose to express the request in rather informal language.

This brief mention of some of the writer's choices provides a certain amount of information about the writer's relation to her intended audience. The choices suggest that the writer has enough authority to insist on a particular way of doing things yet does not want to sound too bossy, too authoritarian. The writer seeks, rather, to maintain a casual, good-natured relation with the reader while making sure that, in the future, the reader follows a specific set of procedures.

The choices in this first piece of writing—and the implications of those choices—may seem clearer when we contrast them with choices found in other pieces of writing done at the insurance company. Consider the following memo to a Mr. Wilson.

> Hi, Mr. Wilson, just fill in the authorization and send in the complete card in the enclosed envelope.
>
> The premium is due December 10th, you may

want to send one check in the new account dated Dec. 10 since we are sometimes a little time preparing drafts when there is a change.

Thank you for writing.

As in the note to "Fred," the writer is trying to influence the reader's actions; the writer wants the reader to fill out some sort of authorization and send in a check. Yet in this instance, the writer is a little more polite, the speaker-audience relation is a little more formal. Also, this reader is addressed as *Mr.*, and the writer avoids colloquial terms such as *holler* and *guys* (although the writer does choose a surprisingly casual form of greeting). By contrast with the previous letter, the writer of this letter has no power to insist that "Mr. Wilson" follow a particular course of action. The writer says, "you may want to send [a check]" rather than "Please send a check," and the other request is made in a rather offhand manner; in the phrase "just fill in the [form]," the word *just* implies that the decision is not difficult or time-consuming. Further, this writer assumes that, compared to the reader of the first letter, the reader has little knowledge about the insurance business. Consequently, the writer includes some background information about the time involved in preparing drafts and avoids words that have a very specialized meaning.

The third piece of writing, obviously a form letter, was typed on bond stationery which bore the insurance company's letterhead.

Your bank has returned your premium payment described above for Non-Sufficient Funds the second time and it cannot be redeposited.

Your insurance coverage is now no longer in effect and cannot provide protection to your beneficiaries nor build benefits for yourself as originally intended. If you wish to reinstate this coverage we must have a cashier's check or money order in the amount of the payment which has been returned from your bank.

If the payment is more costly than you feel you wish to have deducted from your account each month, you may contact us or your representative and it could be changed to a more convenient amount in most cases.

If you have any questions we would appreciate hearing from you. An envelope is provided for your convenience in corresponding or for returning your cashier's check or money order.

Yours very truly,

As do the first two pieces of writing, this letter attempts to influence the reader's actions. Evidently, the insurance company would prefer to have the customer's policy remain in force and to continue to receive the customer's premium payments. Yet the speaker-audience relationship in this letter is comparatively formal, without being cold or critical. When this letter is sent out, we may be sure that all the conventions of good business letter writing will be observed. For example, the reader will be addressed "Dear Mr." (or "Dear Ms.") rather than "Hi, Mr. _____," and there will be a colon after the reader's name, not a comma as was the case in the memo to Mr. Wilson.

In addition to these choices pertaining to the form of the letter, I particularly want to note some of the choices regarding sentence structure and content. The first sentence seems a bit awkward; it would read more smoothly if it were rearranged thus: "Your bank has, for the second time, returned your premium payment because of non-sufficient funds. Your check cannot be redeposited." Yet despite this awkwardness, the writer has used syntax effectively in several places. Notice the grammatical subjects of the first, second, and third sentences of the letter: The writer begins by saying "*Your bank* has returned your premium payment . . ." and goes on to say "*Your insurance coverage* is now no longer in effect . . ." In each case, the writer avoids focusing on the customer and his/her misdeeds. That is, the writer does not say "*you* have given us a bad check" or "*you* have caused your insurance coverage to lapse." Consequently, the writer avoids the appearance of attacking or criticizing the customer. Further, the request for payment focuses on the insurance agency ("*We* must have a cashier's check . . .") and thus avoids issuing a command ("*You* must send us a cashier's check.") In addition to these choices of sentence structure, the writer chooses to provide the reader with both an alternative to allowing the insurance coverage to lapse and a convenient way to respond to the letter.

These particular pieces of writing were chosen partly because all of them were written by the same person—a bookkeeper in an insurance company. The point is this: Many people in business have to do much more writing than one might expect. And the writing may require them to do much more than observe the conventions of, say, addressing a business letter. They have to make reasonable choices about:

1. The form their writing may take (Will a neatly-typed letter be too time-consuming and formal? Will a scribbled message seem too casual or will it strike just the right note of informality?);

2. the language they will use (How much technical language is the reader likely to understand? Would it be a good idea to be a bit chatty and friendly?);
3. the structure of their sentences;
4. the amount and kind of information they must include.

Some of these choices are made without much deliberation; for an experienced writer, some choices may be almost instinctive. Yet many of these choices reflect considerable astuteness. As an illustration of this last point, consider two letters written by the president of the insurance company where the bookkeeper works.

The first letter is addressed to a man who had contracted to move the insurance executive's house. For some months, the house mover had procrastinated—the weather was too bad, he had too many prior commitments, and so on. At one point he had brought some of his equipment to the work site but then had removed it without explanation. Shortly after the equipment had been removed, the executive wrote the following letter. I have highlighted some of the choices reflected in this letter by including alternatives that the executive might have considered using.

Mr. Art Johnson
Oufda,
South Dakota

Dear { Art:
Mr. Johnson:

{ I note that
It has come to my attention that

you have removed your equipment from the house. This concerns me since it would indicate you're on another job.

{ You must move the house
I expect the house to be moved
It is my expectation that the house will be moved

at the earliest date. I just will not go along with any delay not directly attributable to the weather.

{ If you do not begin work within the next week, you may expect my attorney to bring suit to recover the $4,000 I have paid you.

end letter with paragraph 2; do not make threat explicit.

To provide a context for the letter, here are some of the executive's comments about the house mover.

> Well, when you talk to him, he's an outgoing type of fellow, but he has the reputation of promising and not delivering. But the problem was that the reliable mover in town wanted $12,000 to move the house and Art would move it for $8,000. And so I knew I'd have to put up with something, but how much I didn't know. I suppose, looking backward, I'd still have him move it. There's been de'ay, but for $4,000 . . . .
>
> I've accepted the delay. Actually, I like the guy, and we'll be friends when it's all over. And ultimately the house will be moved. He's not going to hold it against me for being tough. And I won't hold it against him when we finally get it moved.

With this context in mind, consider the executive's choices and some of the reasoning behind them.

1. The executive chose "Dear Art" because "There are some people you call *Mister* and some you call by their first name. I can tell very quickly what the relationship is."
2. The executive chose "I note that," reasoning that "The alternative is not accurate; it implies someone else told me. I want him to know that I personally saw what the situation was."
3. The writer chose "I expect the house to be moved." The first was "too abrupt, too peremptory," and the third was "too soft." The second, he felt, made it clear to the housemover that "I am not accepting anything else."
4. The writer chose *not* to spell out the implications because "He's an intelligent person—cunning, shrewd . . . why use a hammer when you can use a gloved fist . . . I expect he knows what I mean."

For purposes of contrast, here is another letter by the same writer. In this letter, he is telling an out-of-town agent that he is fired. The executive had tried to meet with the agent, but bad weather had made the meeting impossible. Before reading the letter, consider this background information.

> Barry Jones is a man that we hired to direct our insurance program in Montana. We were getting very good results in Montana, and we were giving the credit to Barry; we thought he was doing a good job.
>
> In the interim, however, it became apparent

that Barry was not the one who was responsible for getting this job done—it was Joe Williams. We discovered that Barry Jones was up at Sommers (Montana) and that he didn't go out on the road at all . . . We concluded that he was not a manager at all and as a matter of fact—even worse than that—he wasn't a person we could communicate with. We would call him and he wouldn't return our telephone calls. He seemed to only answer our calls when it was convenient for him.

With this in mind, again consider the writer's alternatives and reasons for choosing a given alternative.

Mr. Barry Jones
Sommers, Montana

Dear { Barry: / Mr. Jones:

{ As you know, the weather would not permit me to be in Billings. Sorry I couldn't make it.

Delete this opening statement.

{ It is now apparent / I now see

that it is for the best interest of you and the company that our relationship be terminated. You need to become involved in something which will yield sufficient income, and the company needs an agency manager who will give full time to the job.

Accordingly, { you are hereby terminated / I am hereby terminating you

as Sales Coordinator, effective immediately.

{ You will, of course, receive whatever compensation is due you on business already produced. In addition, if your agent still had some calls, you may continue to receive any override due you up until February 1, 1978.

Delete this paragraph; end letter with ". . . effective immediately."

As before, here are the insurance executive's choices and the reasons he gave for making these choices.

1. The writer chose "Dear Barry" since "I still know him that well."
2. The writer chose to include the introductory paragraph about the weather preventing his meeting with the agent. "I have a habit of wanting to lead to what I want to talk about," he noted. This "lead-in" seemed especially important in this letter since the executive said he prefers to convey bad news in a face-to-face conversation. The lead-in serves, in part, to justify the writer's departure from his normal practice.
3. The executive chose "It is now apparent" because the phrase "implies that I am taking everything into account."
4. The writer chose "You are hereby terminated," stating that he prefers not to use *I* when "speaking for the company."
5. The executive chose to spell out the implications of this letter; he wanted the agent to have "no chance to misinterpret what I mean since I represent the company."

One point these two letters illustrate is that the writing this executive does is not governed by straightforward rules that say always do this or never do that. At some points, he deliberately uses the pronoun *I*, at other points he deliberately avoids it. In the first letter, he does not mention the implications of his statements. Yet in the second letter, he carefully spells them out. In different contexts, he makes different choices. Even more important, in different contexts he uses different reasons to justify his choices. In commenting on the first letter, the insurance executive frequently explained his choices by referring either to his intended audience or to the effect he wished to have on that audience. In the second letter, the executive made fewer references to his audience and, instead, referred to his position as spokesman for the company.

One cannot generalize about all writing done in business on the basis of these few examples. But the texts and writers' comments about them provide enough information to make reasonable if still tentative observations. The common theme in these observations is that any piece of business writing exists in one or more contexts that are very important to the writer. As I interviewed writers about the pieces I have discussed thus far, it became clear that these writers are almost never given an unfamiliar topic and told to produce an impromptu piece of writing on that topic. Before they write, they may have interviewed someone, chatted with a client or co-worker, jotted down some notes, or looked up some information in a file. At the very least, they may have reviewed what they already know about the policy of their organization. In other words, one context for a given piece of writing is the activity (e.g., talk with co-workers; ref-

evance to institutional policy; tentative notes to oneself) that precedes the attempt to write a draft.

Another context is writers' understanding of the response their writing is likely to receive. Many of the people I have talked to do not consider themselves highly expert writers. But so long as they see some purpose to their writing, so long as they feel someone else will be informed or persuaded or helped by what they say, they write with a certain amount of good will and care. When they sense that no one will ever pay any attention to the substance of what they say, they approach their work with cynicism and indifference. The only skill or ingenuity they show is in devising reasons to avoid writing.

One other important context is the writer's sense of the specific audience and purpose for each piece of writing. As I have already pointed out, business writers make several different kinds of choices (of language, syntax, content, organization) each time they write. Moreover these choices are rarely governed by simple rules that say always do this or never do that. Instead, writers base these choices on their understanding of the audience, their relation to the audience, and/or their purpose in writing.

Curiously enough, even the three pieces of writing with which this article began supports the point I am making here. The first piece contained this sentence: "When we have a lapse, cancellation or NSF less than 6 months in force we reverse those contracts off advance." The interesting thing about this passage is that it was written by the same person who composed the note to "Fred," the memo to "Mr. Wilson," and the form letter that begins: "Your bank had returned your premium payment. . . ." In other words, the style in this passage was just one style in the writer's repertoire. Moreover, it made sense because she was writing to an audience that understood her specialized terminology. The letter confirming a loan to a bank ("This letter will serve as our commitment. . . .") was, indeed, a form letter. But it is rare, in my experience, to find someone (other than a clerk or secretary) who writes only form letters. Finally, even the announcement about "planned price adjustments" reflects some interesting and, I think, appropriate choices. Here again is the announcement:

> The prices listed herein conform with the provisions of the Executive Order stabilizing prices, wages, and rents announced on August 15, 1971, and subsequent implementing orders and directives. Planned price adjustments for 1971 have been temporarily suspended.

I do not admire this impersonal style of writing, but I appreciate some of the choices the writer has made when I consider an alternative way the passage might have been written:

> We'd planned to raise our prices for next year, but we can't. At least not right now. The feds won't let us. So the prices of things listed in this brochure go along with the executive order issued a while back that puts a lid on prices and so forth. Maybe you should try to take advantage of the situation and place your orders now for materials you'll need for next year.

Before commenting on these passages, I would like to introduce two more passages. The first is an announcement that a college professor distributed to students who were going on a field trip to an art museum in Chicago.

> Trippers will meet at 7:15 (Kalamazoo time) in front of the Union. The bus will leave promptly at 7:30 a.m. There will be no watering stops between Kalamazoo and Chicago, so I strongly suggest that you all eat something vaguely resembling breakfast before we start — something substantial and comforting like a Hershey bar. . . . After lunch everyone is on his own in the museum. Museum fatigue is a very real phenomenon and I caution you to use some restraint in your viewing, taking the twentieth century first and whatever else you can manage after that. (cited in Macrorie, 1970, p. 23)

The second passage is my revision of this announcement, which I tried to write in the style of the announcement about "planned price adjustments."

> Participation in the proposed tour of the Chicago Museum of Art is contingent upon participants' arriving at the Western Michigan State University Union prior to the authorized departure time of 7:15 a.m. (Eastern Standard Time). Participants should be advised that there will be no stops between the point of departure and the scheduled arrival in Chicago. It is recommended, therefore, that participants make adequate preparation for the journey.

I assume we can agree that neither of my revisions is an adequate substitute for the original. The college professor wanted to convey some information and also give some advice — no mean trick when dealing with college students. Consequently, the teacher needed to be as engaging and personable as possible.

The impersonal bureaucratic voice we hear in my revision would be inappropriate for the intended audience and purpose. By contrast, the writer of the notice on the price bulletin was merely trying to convey information without giving advice or creating any personal bond with his or her audience. Thus the writer was probably wise to avoid the chatty voice and intimate audience relation implied in my revision. Given their different audiences and purposes, I think each passage is a creditable, if not superb, piece of writing. Each writer has made choices of diction, syntax and content that seem appropriate for the intended audience and purpose.

The preceding observations have several implications for the teaching of writing. Clearly, one implication is that students need preparation for writing. This may take the form of class discussion, role playing, or reading, or it may be a more focused activity. Before they can write about a topic, students need help in exploring that topic in order to decide what they wish to say.

A second implication is that we should not simply assign topics; rather, we should identify or help students identify the audiences and purposes for which they write. Further, we should ask students to write for a wide variety of audiences and purposes. There may be periods of time — a semester or at most a year — when we want to emphasize one particular kind of writing, but our writing programs should include the diversity of writing tasks that writers actually have to do. In creating writing programs that have this diversity, we have several useful sources to draw on. The first is the well-known *Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum K-13* by James Moffett (1968). Less widely known but very useful are Moffett's set of curriculum materials titled *Interaction* and John Field and Robert Weiss' text, *Cases for Composition* (1979). All three of these show how to get students to write in a variety of forms for diverse audiences and purposes. Classroom materials concerning audience and purpose appear in texts by Koch and Brazil (1978) and by Stanford and Smith (1977).

A final implication is this: Once we have helped students begin to think about a topic, and once we have helped them understand the audience and purpose for which a particular piece of writing is intended, we must be sure that their writing receives an appropriate response. That is, we cannot treat students' writing as a test of their ability to avoid certain kinds of "errors." For a variety of practical ways one might respond (or train students to respond) to a student's writing, I recommend articles by Charles Cooper (1975) and Mary Beaven (1977).

Since we have a number of specific classroom procedures that will let us act upon the suggestions made, we can, if we choose, relate our teaching of writing to the writing that goes on outside our classrooms. The question now is: Should we do this? What justification can we give to ourselves, our students, and our communities? One pragmatic argument, of course, is that we are preparing students to succeed in their chosen lines of work. There is some merit to that argument. I know of large corporations and government agencies where people are not promoted unless they write with some skill. But the obvious limitation of the pragmatic argument is that not all of our students will spend their adult lives trying to climb a corporate or bureaucratic ladder to success. Some students will take jobs that require little or no writing. Other students will go to college where they will be required to do fairly specialized writing that may be, in some ways, quite different from that which I have discussed in this article.

A more compelling argument begins with the assumption that we should base our teaching on what we assume to be true of literate, mature human beings. This presupposes the knowledge that a writer's audience may differ from him or her in any number of ways and that different audiences may make diverse demands on a writer. To respond to these demands, a writer must know the alternatives that are possible and must be able to make reasonable choices among these alternatives.

As teachers of writing, we are in a good position to help students understand these alternatives. By teaching them to do what writers have to do when they write, we can contribute to students' intellectual and personal growth. This may be ambitious, but it is consistent with some of our basic values as English teachers. It suggests why I think that our understanding of the writing people have to do as a regular part of their daily work can inform what we need to do as teachers of writing.

NOTE

1. This name, of course, is a pseudonym, as are all other names used in the business writing materials in this article.

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